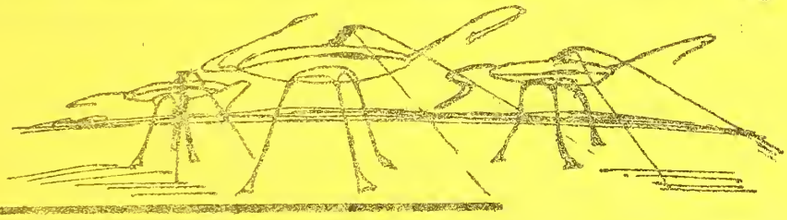
LOOK! DOWN THERE — BEFORE MY EYES!

IS IT A SCRAP OF PAPER?
IS IT A TEN-DOLLAR BILL?

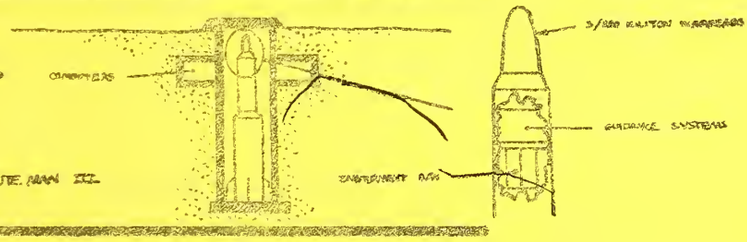
NO!

IT'S THE WORDEATER

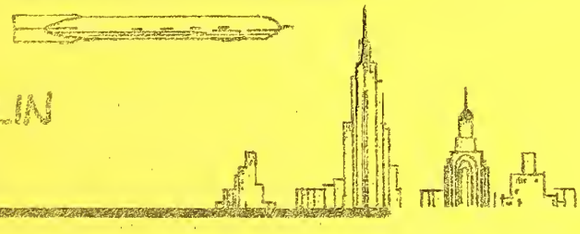
FASTER THAN
A DEATH-RAY



MORE POWERFUL
THAN A MIRV
WARHEAD



CAN EVEN LEAP
HIGHER THAN A ZEPPLIN
IN A SINGLE BOUND



YES, THE WORDEATER — BROUGHT TO THIS COLLEGE BY STRANGE BEINGS FROM ANOTHER PLANET. ALTHOUGH DISGUISED AS ORDINARY PAPER, THE WORDEATER POSSESSES POEMS AND SHORT STORIES FAR BEYOND THOSE OF MORTAL PUBLICATIONS.

THE WORDEATER — FIGHTING A NEVER ENDING BATTLE FOR TRUTH JUSTICE AND THE AMERICAN WAY!

E. LOVEKAMP 2-22-76

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STAFF FOR WORDEATER XV

Pat Bohler, Michael Markwell, and Sharon Marizza (Student Members) John Stobart (Faculty) and Loud Mouth McCracken (Ubiquitous, Omnipresent, sometimes Obnoxious, but never Unconscious)

Wordeater awards will be given for Wordeaters XV and XVI in the next edition. Submission deadline for Wordeater XVI is May 8, 1976. Submit Manuscripts, Poems, Cover Designs (on 8½" by 14" paper with 1" margins) to J. Stobart, C1069 by May 8, 1976 to qualify for the awards.

The $10 awards for front and back cover designs for Wordeater XV were won by Love Kamp and Jan Emerson.

John Stobart is the sole (and lonely) judge for the awards. The entire staff selects contents for Wordeater.

Alone Now

Often
I think of my position of solitude
being far beyond yesterday's dreams,
having said goodbye
    to the lovers that dwelled in my heart,
leaving the places
    I held deepest meaning for.
Empty rooms are filled with unfamiliar faces
the sun no longer streams through the window
when once, the sun never set.
I heard somewhere,
    that joys are never wholly felt
until one has experienced pain and hurt.
I am alone now
    feeling pain
        knowing hurt
sharing with myself
the knowledge yesterday outlines,
learning to live
on the basis of change - -
    the only permanent factor in
        existence.

- Linda Bohm -

B.B.C.

Open your eyes -
find the pieces of sunlight
that fall only upon wonder.
Today is only a moment
in the vastness of forever
but today possesses gifts
that eternity overlooks.
Tomorrow's promises may be broken -
but my kiss need not promise.

Penny for your thoughts
share with me, only yourself -
the wonders a heart can contain - all at once.
It's surprising.
Open wide your arms
if only for a moment.
Caress my trembling heart
with the beauty of today.
You'd never know what is behind my smile
but I'd tell you if you asked.

I'd love to kiss you awake
just to say hello.

Today's treasures,
the touching of souls in the smallest
slice of time
seen only by pieces of sunlight
and
    you and I.

- Linda Bohm -

It's Not That I Don't Care

If I appear to be
past recognition -
don't worry,
I'm still alive.

If by chance
your touch leaves me unawakened
realize,
I'm slow to respond.

If you say, hello!
and I don't hear you
don't mind,
I've been quiet lately
it's not that I don't care.

If I leave you
with a feeling of perplexity
don't wonder at all;
I'm not being rude
I simply don't want your obligation to me
or to leave any expectations with you.

- Linda Bohm -

Jack and Jill

Jack and Jill went up the hill
To fetch a pail of water.
But, oh poor Jill forgot the Pill.
Now little Jack's a father!

- Pam Heavens -

Concourse Talk

Wow, did ya see Betty's new boyfriend...
how'd she get him...my brother said he'd
introduce me to a friend of his course he
hasn't yet...got a comb this hair's a
mess I really should get it cut...thanks
...Ann's getting married in June I said 2
she was stupic...oh get me a Coke too...
but she wouldn't listen some people don't
stop to hear common sense...good I've
got time to tell ya about Joan and Steve
...thanks for the pop...anyway she said...

And the flip-top tab missed the garbage can.

- Pam Heavens -

Eucalyptus

Ancient fragrance
Earthy and clean
Pungent and fresh
Fills me with images
Lost forgotten scenes
Dreams visions
Olfactory memories
Lone ago - -

- Janellen Little -

Dilema

Pierce my mind
Fill my soul
Will you let me go?

I am the one - not you!
That holds on fast
Clutching and screaming - to be free!

- Janellen Little -

Sunset's Veil

The day is lonely
When the sky is grey.
The hours drag by in an endless way.

When the sun finally sets
at the end of the day
It's orange and red
and lavender grey.

But is it really
Lavender grey
or do my tears make it seem that way?

- Barb Bush -

Thank You

I must hurry and go now, but before I do I want to thank you.
Thank you for making me the person I am.
Thank you for caring about me.
Thank you for Saturday nights and beer parties.
Thank you for the love of a man I thought I'd never find.
Yes, thank you Life, thank you for these glorious years.
But, as you see, Death is at my door -

And I can no longer keep him waiting.

- Pam Heavens -

I Can't

I can't write of love because I've never
experienced it.
I can't write of lobster because I've never
tasted it.
I can't write about Paris because I've never
been there.

It's time I started experiencing...tasting...
and travelling.
Would you like to join me?

- Pam Heavens -

To Emily Dickinson
(After Visiting Her Home)

You were not in your kitchen setting daily loaves to cool,
Nor viewing life through favored corner windows.
I did not meet you in the orchard where you strolled each day,
Or on the east lawn where your flowers bloomed.
You were not walking on the path "just wide enough for two"
when I walked there;
Yet you breathe life throughout your "songs," fragmented, bound by
tender threads, each time I read your "letter to the world."

- Michael Markwell -

On Being Born

Without the least intent of growing old
I lost the ease of laughter I once knew;
I ceased regarding strangers as new friends
And trusting friends as though they trusted me.
The change required no effort on my part:
Peace fell away by pieces through the years.
Mankind, I found, possessed an ugly side
That all my good intentions could not change.
And when at last, despaired of finding hope,
I'd faced corruption in my heart as well,'
I gave the Lord my deadness for the cross
And in exchange He gave me a new birth.
In flesh alone there's naught but slow decay;
In Jesus Christ are life and hope and peace.

- Michael Markwell -

Regress

Come and sit beside me here
On this sunny hill.
Watch the passing clouds become
Anything you will.

Watch the butterflies and bees
Dancing in the sky.
You can see with children's eyes,
If you really try.

Smell the earth and grass below,
Taste a tender blade.
Know the things the children know -
Everything God made.

- Michael Markwell -

October Light

The leaves, though herald in their bud
And psalmody in summer breeze,
Transcend themselves as autumn's dawn:
Crisp, fragrant rays among the trees.

- Michael Markwell -

Review
(To the Author of my soul, with love)

Though this is certainly not Your greatest masterpiece, Your recent revision of the rough draft is very promising.

I especially liked the introduction of the three-dimensional Character at the end of the first chapter. He redeemed the entire work from its initial dull, plodding, confused theme, and made the whole thing come to life.

The frequent fore-lighting of the happy ending is also a delightful touch.

- Michael Markwell -

Turnabout

Since women's lib, a dam has burst,
Unwanted love imbuing
Unto the fellow from the lass:
He's chaste, and she's pursuing.

- Michael Markwell -

Priorities

Alas, poor girl, she thought their love
Was purely transcendental;
To him, the fact she had a mind
Was just coincidental.

- Michael Markwell -

Neo-Eden

Will you hide from Him
When He walks through your personal garden
Or apologize and start over again?

- Michael Markwell -

Irony

Has a God of love and grace
Created us for dying?
That would seem illogical,
And most dissatisfying.

"Male and female created He them."
Their issue kills its brother;
Old and dying, sick and lost,
Create we one another.

- Michael Markwell -

Proximity

Proximity of mortal form
Does not ensure the heart;
How often, when the flesh draws near,
Souls glance and move apart.

- Michael Markwell -

Perspective

No sea is deeper than the Self,
Nor sky is wider than the I;
Yet God can fill vast chasms up -
Expansive Me can only try.

- Michael Markwell -

Keep It Short

Ten zeros multiplied by ten
Increase their value not a bit;
Verbosity does not exceed
Economy of word, plus wit.

- Michael Markwell -

Whimsy

I seem to recall
in the glass on my wall
(once while viewing my doubtful physique)

A familiar hat prop
that perched there on the top
was inviting my studied critique.

My thoughts flew away
in a whimsical way
lost in musing the use of head

What things does it do?
It's not just meant to
fill the space at the head of my bed.

It: carries a grin
(there I tuck my food in);
gives my nose an admirable perch;

Makes caves for my eyes,
and is of such a size
as to fit in new headgear for church.

Each side holds an ear . . .
A head does, it is clear
keep my neck from looking unfinished.

It faces the front -
to be painfully blunt
if it doesn't one's value's diminished.

It makes me seem tall,
and it won't even fall
if I hang by my heels just for fun,

but still there is more
my head was made for
even tho it's in fashion to have one.

My head is not there
just to hold up my hair,
or for keeping my glasses in place,

inside is a brain
which records joy and pain
in spans of incalculable space.

Within is the key
to this strange entity
"I" who sits here and struggles to give.

A quick peek inside,
a short fanciful ride
through part of this "sphere" where I live.

- Jan Emerson -

star light, star bright, go away! I'm tryin' ta sleep. I see you.

what do ya get when ya back into a brass doorknob, an' yer naked.

Never look a gifted horse from the rear. (messy)
never look a gifted horse in the nose.
never look a gifted horse in the ear
never look a gifted horse cross-eyed
never give a gifted horse the bird.
never think about a gifted horse, 'cause there ain't non

elephants make strange bedfellows.
elephants always forget (they smoke dope)
elephants are nice when they sit on your face

I've got lots of friends somewhere. I've got lots of friends, but they died. I've got lots of friends that don't like me.

LOADED

I made a boo-boo

What do ya get when ya fall through an outhouse. (messy)

The family that stays togeather is weird.
The family that stays togeather has anemic children.
The family that stays togeather are holy rollers.
The family that stays togeather soon goes crazy.
The family that stays togeather end up killing each other.

Lord take me downtown, I'm just lookin' for a quarter I lost.
Lord take me downtown, I'm just lookin' for my brain. (it fell out of my ear)
Lord take me downtown, 'cause i'm to loaded to find my way.
Lord take me downtown, 'cause mommy and daddy won't.

Lord take me downtown, I'm just lookin' for some— ?

You know that one?

I know it's only rock 'n' roll, but who cares?
I know it's only rock 'n' roll, so the hell with ya'.
I know it's only rock 'n' roll, can I go home now?
I know it's only rock 'n' roll, so John Denver, go back to the farm. ← (?)

Do you know the way to the bathroom
Do you know the way home.
Do you know the way to your car
Do you know your name (no)

Thank God I'm alive. where would I be without my car.
Thank God I'm loaded. where would I be without money.
Thank God the teacher likes me. where would I be without my platforms.
Thank God yer ol' man's rich. where would I be if I stayed on the farm.
Thank God I'm a city boy where would I be without my lid.
Thank God for rock 'n' roll where would I be without the B.G.'s.
Thank God for loose women when yer lonly. (in a better place)
Thank God for the beautyful woman at J.J.C. (I need one!)

-- California Kid bit in of 1 of 2 --

- Jan Emerson -

Betoken

Untrodden woodlands lie beyond
the rhythyms in your eyes.
In virgin, shifting, crystal chords
the circle of the skies
(A golden wedding ring of light)
will link your soul and mine
as through the lifting veil the imprints
of our minds entwine.
I of air and water.
You of earth and air.
Yet how strange to feel the strength
of all the fire there.
Torch-bearer of eternal flame
flash-burned away the rust
that held my doors closed tightly
and wouldn't let me trust.
No pressure could unlatch them
then the gentle breeze of you
silently insistently nudged in before
I knew.
It wasn't by intention - that
motioning soft air.
You didn't know you'd touched me -
didn't even care.
I couldn't let you pass, let you
go . . . unknowing
That you had opened up a room
of flowers I'd been growing.
So I sent the Garden's call
to play beneath the Sea,
in hopes that by the echoes
the waves would show you Me.
Long before you "saw" me I
knew many of your faces -
even when the masks are gone
they leave behind their traces.
Each of us are treasure chests
but spilled among our treasure
are items from Pandora's Box
disguised to look like pleasure.
We all have taken side roads
and fallen in the dirt.
Which of us can claim the right
to scorn a fall that hurt?
Each fall has written whispers
and written where it shows -
for those who read the language
and in the reading, knows.
Someday will we talk of falls
it took to gain our feet?
Will you and I in honesty
banish self-deceit?
Then standing clean and naked,
peaceful in the Sun
inflict no future wound but let
both of us be One?
I saw that Sun shine through you
and by its truthful ray
reflect back only beauty.
I see it more today.
Ungiven gifts, untouched fruit,
fenced in pasturland,
all that lies unformed in me will
soon rest in your hand.
The voice of Fear cries
"Caution! Life shifts and
changes fates. To keep from being
torn apart you've stayed behind
my gates."
I hear the voice and send back smiles
lent from that space above you
that links the stars and kisses
me . . . I know that I will love You.

Tides

My tides have brushed the shellfish
child fresh from oyster bay
who steps out freely on the air
and leaves her shell of clay.

Thoughts unfolding to the wind,
wild scattered bright seafoam,
as murmuring from silken nights
calls her on to roam.

A clustering of snowstars sheds
light to lure her feet.
Dank catacombs left far behind
she heeds the distant beat.

Of beckoning "Tomorrow's Land"
that still eludes her touch.
Only those who aren't yet
"Home" can realize how much

She longs for fields she left
behind milleniums ago,
or reaches out her fingertips
to know . . . to know . . . to know.

Know she does. Know she will. . .
by partial knowing learned
that freedom for the moments
spent. To shell land she's returned.

"Iron hand in velvet glove . . ."
The law must be fulfilled,
then evanescent scattered dreams
converge as ere they spilled

And melt away the prison shell -
vanished, as is time.
Eternal flight - her song a gift
a clearly echoed chime.

- Jan Emerson -

Simple Simplicity

"Keep it simple" so it's said
the plot, the verse, the song
"uncomplicated" then the work will
thrive and move along.

Well, simple is as simple says
and simple-minded be.
My thousand simple daily tasks
are quite enough for me.

"Simplicity is beauty". . .I'll not
dispute this point,
but even too much 'beauty'
throws one's senses out of joint.

Uneventful are my hours,
an elementary spree.
So writing verse I strive to voice
the complex part of me.

In words that flare and soar
and pulse, that tear and bend and sway,
that speak exacting as they can
just what I want to say.

Simple words may well suffice
describing junior's rash.
Descriptively they're valuable
as counterfeited cash.

What single word means quite the
same as "nascent"? - There, you see?
That's only one of multitudes which
speak specifically.

We'll reach this understanding
then between just me and you -
I won't use a dozen "simple" words
where one choice word will do.

- Jan Emerson -

Wondering

How much has changed since our
beginning
When galaxies within me
spinning
Collided, whirled, then split
apart
In that part of mind that is
the heart.

When colored lights like bouncing
balls
Danced unrestrained though silent
halls
And lit my being in their
glow
(Strange fireworks that pulse and
flow)
Kaliedescopic in their changing
melding, breaking, rearranging.

To change my thoughts of life
and knowing
Through their recreation
sowing
Seeds of hope, of fear,
of ecstasy
Of mind, of thought, of all
that's me.

How much has changed since
our beginning . . .?

- Jan Emerson -

Being or Not

Oh
  I would weep
    if I could,
  but I am locked here
  within society's fear
        that people
                are human.

- Bonnie Sayko -

Idol Dreams

She -
    she is it,
    Ms. of misses,
    Queen of hits.
  Upon her pedestal
          admired by all
          (so she says),
          not about to fall.

She'll always know,
      but can't confess,
  that the only reason
      for her success
  is pedestal-placement
      just to see up her dress.

- Bonnie Sayko -

Joshua's Horn Blues

I hear chords echo down the hall
  He sings his songs of love
          I wonder about mine.
A-minor leads into C-major,

  My harmonies turn to dissonance.
He closes his eyes
          to emphasize
  the truth that always seemed a lie,
"To love another
                you gotta love yourself,
    babe, I love you more each day."
He pledges himself to an unseen love,
I deny myself to everyone.
  Oh please, I beg,
            strum me too,
            Turn me into a lover's poem ...
The wall I see
    is inside of me,
    I'll build it down
                turn it all around.
"To love another
                you gotta love yourself,"
          I think I'll start today.

- Bonnie Sayko -

I Wish

My body flying through the air,
having perfect hair -
I wish.

Having the most beautiful, fastest car,
being an international star -
I wish.

Being a person women adore,
writing a hit musical score -
I wish.

Doing everything right,
from my palms, a flash of light -
I wish.

To have the strength of a hundred men,
to be popular once again -
I wish.

Project myself through time and space,
to conquer the human race -
I wish.

To have everything that is new,
to be loved by you -
I wish.

- California Kid -

Don't count your chickens before you eat them.
Don't count your chickens before you buy them.
Don't count your chickens before they rip your lips off.
(Don't count chickens)

People who live in glass houses shouldn't invite Ella Fitzgerald to dinner.
People who live in glass houses shouldn't have monster fights.

A stitch in time is worthless (I don't know what it means either)
A stitch in time saves your life.
A stitch in time saves your rear from freezing.

A bird in the hand is worth some tush on the side.
A bird in the hand is worth five dollars.
A bird in the hand is worth a little fertilizer.

Obey your elders, so you will be wrong too.

Early to bed, early to rise, makes a person dull, boaring, and a red neck.
Early to bed, early to rise, makes a person a grandparent

An apple a day causes constipation
An apple a day causes an apple shortage

An apple a day ruins your teeth.

A penny saved is worthless.
A penny saved is one cent.
A penny saved takes up room in your pocket.

A penny saved causes economic problems.

If at first you don't succeed, get some one else to do it.
If at first you don't succeed, cry. If at first you don't succeed, forget it.
(forget them)

Yours is not to reason why, yours is just to go to the bathroom while you can.

When all else fails, drop your class.
When all else fails, lie like hell.

Do as you're told, not what you think.

Do as you're told, and you get in trouble anyway.

Those who stop to think often get run over by trucks.

California Kid

Eagle In The Sky

Purple moon,
fifth of June,
eagle in the sky.
Comet soars,
lion roars,
fire in the sky.
Mourning at noon,
crooner's swoon,
fire in her eye.
Chevy chase,
tons of mace,
pollution's sonic boom.
Don's American pie,
soft sleek thigh,
falling to your doom.
It's his day,
fly away,
eagle in the sky.

- California Kid -

I AM THE ROCK
I WALK
ALONE
AND NEITHER WINDS
NOR SANDS OF TIME
SHALL STAY ME FROM MY PATH

I CANNOT TOUCH
I CANNOT CRY
BUT NEITHER DO I FEAR
THE IRON SLINGS
AND STEEL ARROWS
OF SIMPLE MINDED MEN
I AM THE ROCK
I WALK ALONE

THE SKY GROWS DARK
THE EARTH GROWS STILL
I AM THE ROCK
I AM
ALONE

- Richard Leclercq -

Desp
(A hand reaches out
and clasps the empty)
air

- Richard Leclercq

Retrospective

It seems like only yesterday
In myriads of ways
When Iron sang as Butterflies*
and Beatles were at play

New Orleans Jazz
Saint Louis Blues
Each city had its sound
and if you wanted Country
Nashville was your town

But Country Music doesn't sell in Nashville
They're diggin; Rock 'n' Roll in Tennessee
And when the Man
In Alabam'
Turns on the Radio
It's Elton John now
And not Phobe Snow

44 and 17* are numbers in a book
but in the days of NFL
the whole world stopped to look
East was East and West was West
A clear wall did divide
and even the oppressed had equal freedom to decide

But Country Music doesn't sell in Nashville
They're diggin' Rock 'n' Roll in Tennessee
and when the Man
in Alabam'
Turns on that radio
It's Elton John now and not Phobe Snow

The times they are a changin'
Sang Dylan and the Byrds*
When everybody sang along
and no one knew the words

It seems like only yesterday
In myriads of ways
Tomorrow is already here
and did not come to stay

Country Music doesn't sell in Nashville
They're diggin Rock 'n' Roll in Tennessee
and when the Man
in Alabam'
Turns on that radio
It's Elton John now
and not Phobe Snow

*Iron Butterfly and the Byrds were superstars of the music scene in the early '60s. 44 was the number of Gail Sayers, and 17 was the number of Johnny Unitas, two famous football players of the early '60s.

- Richard Leclercq -

Unknown Quantity

Will you ever know what you're
made of if they accept you at face
value?

For to look beyond is past reality
and into a world that is unknown,

With its implications, demands
and its questions unanswered.

If the body is but a container
A Vehicle of the mind,
Then the mind is never changing
But stands to remain
untapped like a locked vault,
until one day in one body
a wall is broken down,
a bridge is crossed,
and from that day on, your life
will never be the same.
Because your mind will never know
any boundaries.
And the old self, just an image
of the past toward the spirit
of change.

II

How do we cross that gap,
that body of water whose
darkness matches the lack of
reasoning, but still beckons
the visitor on yonder shore?
Should I step off?

Not that I mind the water
But still can I survive without
support? The decision is
only mine, it's only my life.

III

Oh why do I hold on,
to this shell,
this vehicle,
this container of my mind?
Why do I think it so dear
As to be the real meaning of
my existence?

I know I only live for today
To satisfy self, for
self-satisfaction.
Where am I?

IV

It's dark, but warm and friendly
I am not alone and I feel
Like I'm flowing in all directions
A separation has occured
My mind is free, but I'm
in control.

I have but one thought
and only need one breath.

I can see myself through the
ripples on the surface.
Can that be me?
All shallow in feelings.
Why am I like that?
Who else did I hurt?
Is time running out?
Will you be there?

- Joseph Rozbesky -

On Nothing

The height of nothing, to turn completely inward, to analyze the reason for your very existence, and then only act in accordance with the results.

LAST WEDNESDAY YOU WERE A MILLION MILES AWAY
OR WAS IT TEN LIFE SPANS AGO
DID YOU RETURN TO YOUR FORMER SELF,
A WINGED IMAGE AT TEN THOUSAND
THE WIND YOUR DIRECTION
THE STARS YOUR GUIDE
TODAY, TOMORROW, NEXT YEAR
NEVER TO RETURN TO YESTERDAY
THE WORLD HOLDS NO DESIGNS
YOUR ONLY RESPONSIBILITY IS TO
YOUR MIND.

BUT THEN WE TALK
ONLY TO SAY NOTHING.
BUT WE SHOULD ANALYZE THE SILENCE
BETWEEN THE WORDS
BECAUSE IT HAS NO CLOTHES, AND
IT IS THE ESSENCE OF FRIENDSHIP.
IF PEOPLE HAVE TO TALK TO BE
TOGETHER, THEN THERE'S NO
REASON TO DREAM.

- Joseph Rozbesky -

The Answer

If you're telling me I'm so
wrong
Then you should be able to
Hold your candle to a black-
board
And expect a reflection . . .
Or could it be, your candle
If held high on top the hill
Won't even begin to illuminate
the universe . . .
But wait, if you look closely,
You just might be able to tell
The direction of the wind -

If it hasn't already extinguished
your light . . . . . .

- Joseph Rozbesky -

Yes, I Know.

Yes, I know,
sometimes.
You can't tame
the wind,
nor calm
the sea.
You can't make
a mountain dance for you,
nor make the
three moons cry.
You've learned
defeat,
as I told you
you would.
Look at me
please,
and don't give up.
Is it because
I love you
that
You try so hard?

- toad -

We Are

We are but a passing thought
in the world's mind,
all but a passing tear
in God's eye.

- toad -

And The Wind Whispered

And the wind whispered,
come,
let me take you away
where there
is
No time, only lazy summer days
watching the sun dance
across the sky,
and the clouds
entangled,
begging for release.
And the wild crow cried,
I know a magic land
where the trees laugh and bow
trying to find
what they lost
long ago.
But no one bothered
to listen.
The sea screamed, hitting hard
against the shore,
never returned.
The wild crow flew away
to his magic land.
Old man winter came to rule
his quiet domain,
and only the free winds
cried.

- toad -

My Dog

In back of the crumbling shed
lays my dog with a hole in her head.
A boy having fun
with his father's new gun,
took aim and filled her with lead.

- Gale Blogg -

Carson Lantz

A little boy named Carson Lantz
would get his kicks by killing ants.
He'd take a looking glass and turn
it to the sun and watch them burn.

What makes a boy with docile looks
Put worms inside his mother's books?

- Gale Blogg -

The Wreck

I sat on the curb in front of our house. It was a hot, muggy Sunday and tiny gnats kept crowding around my festering mosquito bites.

None of my friends were around. Most of them had gone away for the day. My mom had taken my little brother and sister to Grandmother's. She had her doubts about leaving me at home but I reminded her that I was twelve years old. I'd be a teenager next year.

I thought about riding my bike down to the river. My friends and I used to like to go to the river a lot. We'd catch tiny crabs and take them to my girlfriend's father for his fishing bait.

I loved to wade in the shallow part of the river. The bottom was covered with long, slimy seaweed. Sometimes it would wrap around my ankles and I'd get panicky. It was almost as if the seaweed had arms and was trying to pull me under.

We had planned to go swimming that afternoon, but none of us felt like going since our former first grade teacher had drowned herself there a few weeks ago. They found her car parked under the bridge one morning and she was floating a ways downstream. I can't figure out why she'd want to stop living. Adults always seemed a lot sadder than kids.

A freight train was going by at the end of our block. I liked the sound of the freights. They put me to sleep at night when they'd go by. Our big, old house would rattle.

While I was sitting there, Mrs. Crate came walking by. She was a nutty, little lady that lived down the street. She always carried a big shopping bag with handles that was always full of something. I was dying to find out what she carried in that bag. I was kind of scared of her, though. She talked funny and it was hard to understand her.

"How you day? Be warm day." She'd kind of yodel it. I could imitate her pretty good and make my friends laugh.

Jimmy Miller went riding by on his bike, going to the store for his mother. His family was the family that lived on the road in back of our house. He had about eight brothers and sisters. My friend Dave always used to say to him, "Open your mouth, Jimmy and show us your Dentine smile," or "Here comes the human dustbowl."

I rode my bike downtown and bought a blueberry popsicle. It was melting real fast and my hands got sticky so I rode over to the park to wash them in the fountain. A middle aged woman was sitting on a bench just staring into space. Her hands were folded and she wasn't even blinking an eye.

It was late in the afternoon when I reached home. I heard a freight coming. I peddled fast down the street so I could be close when it went by. I liked to wave to the conductor.

The red railroad lights were flashing and the bells were clanging. An automobile was coming fast from the east. It all happened so fast. It never occured to me that the driver of the car wouldn't stop. You'd have to be crazy to try and beat a train - especially when it was so close.

The engine of the train split the car right in half. The loud squeal of the train's brakes vibrated in my chest and head. A body landed a few yards from me. It was a woman's body. It couldn't move - the body didn't have any legs.

Blood trickled down the hill to where I stood. I looked down to notice my foot was in a dark red puddle. My canvas shoe had a purple tinge as it seeped up the blood. I felt weak - like I was going to faint.

In a few minutes there were firetrucks and ambulances. I got on my bike and rode home. There was a funny odor in the air and it made me nauseated.

The whole town had gathered down at the tracks. There were cars parked up and down the street and people were hurrying down the sidewalk. I just sat on my front porch wondering why all these people thought it was so important for them to see that awful wreck.

I must have been sitting on the porch for a long time. It was quiet now. The cars and firetrucks were gone but that weird smell still hung in the air. I felt a dampness on my left foot and looked down at my bloody shoe. I took both shoes off and threw them in the rubbish behind the garage. Those old tennis shoes were too worn out anyway. I had been needing to get a new pair.

- Gale Blogg -

My Loves Asleep

My loves asleep with day's expiration.
A man in limber repose.
I see his spirit, his respiration.
What reveries there? What may I suppose?
He dreams of triumphs of adolesence,
or dreams of failures in seniority.
Now regard the smile of sweet innocence;
and now the frown of mass enormity.
He stirs from slumber like a dormant bear.
Hair disarranged, his eyes blind to the light
And says "What, what, what am I doing here?"
"Oh, sleep my love, slumber into the night."
My love is asleep, man inside a child.
My love is asleep, strong and yet so mild.

- Pat Bohler -

Foggy Mental Breakdown

Atomic Fallout from the skies
falls apon your head,
blinds your eyes.
We feel the earth quiver and quake,
as we have realized our deadly mistake.
We can not correct it
by turning back the hands of time,
we are doomed to be eaten by death,
like the stomach upon the consumption of lime.

The radiation dust is eating away our minds,
it is all a matter of time
before we experience a foggy mental breakdown
and our bodies become part of the ground.
Brace yourself and get you down,
in the distance, coming near,
is the Foggy Mental Breakdown.....

--California Kid--

Take Me Away

Well, I was lonely, I was a little down
so I took to looking around the town,
wound up at a local bar with a band,
playing rhythm and blues, something I
could listen to, something I could use.
The place was dark and crowded with
beer-bellied cowboys and some wild youngsters too.
Pool table was in the middle of the floor,
and he was standing by the men's door.

Yes now take me away, take me away,
let's ride out in the sunset with my
arms clutched around your waist
and singing a good country tune.

Feeling a little funny, being the only woman there.
When I past by the line-up, everyone stopped and stared.
I ordered a tall one and sat at a table.
He was coming towards me with a spunky
look in his eye, yes, I was able,
to see your face, dark and gloomy, yet
you seemed to light up the whole place.

Yes, now take me away, take me away,
pick up some speed in our pony race,
my arms are still holding on to your waist,
I can feel myself tripping out to space.

You said, "Hello darling, how are you doing?"
I said, "I'm doing fine," then you took
my glass, saying, "for a pretty woman
like you should be drinking wine."
There I was sitting beside you,
taking in everything, everything in view,
didn't say too much, not much to be said,
when you know what is gonna be ahead.
He took my hand in his to escape outside.
This man was a rambling traveler,
all his life on his bike and I was tumbling after.

Yes, take me away, so far away,
don't stop too long at one place,
remember my arms are still at your waist,
come on, let's don't leave a trace.

You and me with a house of stars over our heads
holding hands in our grassy bed.
Are you a man that wants to hold on to love?
I don't know really, it's too early to tell.
No, I believe you're a free spirit riding in the wind.
You could never be a package to be sent in.
You were telling me, you'll see me again.
Such a lier, such a dreamer, such a charmer.
We both know we had only today
and nothing else hereafter.

- Lezlie Gray -

FLUSH AFTER [illegible] TITLAR ISOLATION
ROUTE NINE NINE THRU MAGNETIC MEMORY
PERUSAL PATTERN OBTAINED WITH KNOWLEDGE
POLARIZED POLES ALEPH NULL CONSTANT
COLLAPSIUN CLAD CALLOUS CURSE
DISSOLVING MICRON MEMORY EGO
SURGE ANALYSIS PULSE

SOMA DITTER THIS IS SEDUCTRIA SMOGSMOCK OF
SPLIT END DEPOT TILTSPLIT CLOISTER
YOU ARE ON SIMULTANEOUS MULTISCREEN
WITH MY TIME CONSTANTS IN MIRRORED SPIRALS
OMITTED PERIOD IN SPELL MATRIX WORKING
GONNA GO BACK IN TIME TO SOME SWAMP
THROWBACK SOME MUTATED GENES FOR ME
TRANSLATE THAT STATIC SURGE PULSE AGAIN
DISTRUPTION NINE AND CLOSING OUT HAV SED
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STONE AGE BEAUTY WHO DOES SHE THINK SHE IS
REFLECTED IN TIDAL POOLS
CANCEROUS CELLS BEGAN TO SWELL VICIOUSLY
IN HER POISONED LIVER
SHE SAW A BLOODY NAUSEATING POTION
AS FAR AS SHE COULD
AND EVEN THE SHIFTING HOLOGRAM
OF CONTACT WITH RAPTURE
AS THE ACCURSED REFLECTIONS
AND THEIR SECRET NAMES

CELL CYCLE CEILING
CENTRALLY SOFT FOCUS CENTRALLY
SCAN SEARCH SATURATION
SWITCH SLIP SLANT SMEAR

Reality of A Dream

All day long the sky remained overcast. It had started raining when I entered the school. There was a feeling of loneliness and uneasiness as I stared at the cluttered walls. Students passed by me with not so much as "hello." I began to feel dejected and unwanted.

I hadn't wanted to come here, but I was a victim of circumstance. I had been born black. I guess God wanted me that way. I never questioned it.

I still remember the decisive letter I received. It was all sort of confusing but I do recall something about "racial balance." Now what the hell was that all about? I was only a confused 13-year-old kid with no idea except that I was being forced to do something that I didn't want to do.

My mother had briefed me on behavior the night before. Twenty miles of drudgery five days a week to obtain that fascinating thing known as "education."

The bus ride was one of unpleasantness since I was the only passenger of an expected 50 students. Somehow I felt like an outcast.

The other parents had made it clear that their children would not be bussed 20 miles to school when they could attend one less than 1 mile away. To hell with politics!

Obviously, my parents felt entirely different. They say no other alternative, because they wanted me to experience the feeling of an education - something they could never boast of.

I didn't go simply because my parents ordered me to, I went also for the sake of them being proud of me. This was their hopes and aspirations -- to someday see their daughter's name up in lights.

Well, here I am! Where do I go from here?

I walked down the never-ending hallway and turned the corridor. I nearly rubbed noses with a blonde, curly haired girl of about 12.

"Excuse me," I found myself saying.

"That's ok," was the response. "You're new here aren't ya?"

"So you noticed!"

"Well it's very hard not to!"

The conversation continued. I found out her name was Joyce. She showed me the room which I was to go to. She said to meet her in the cafeteria at noon and we would eat together. But at noon Joyce didn't sit with me. She sat with her friends at a corner table finding it hard to suppress her laughter. I felt like the low man on the totem pole. I had no where to go. I sat in a far corner wanting to crawl into the woodwork and take up permanent residence there. I ate my lunch in silence and got up to leave. Suddenly, I found myself being surrounded by faces both left and right. They began moving in on me closer and closer. What were they going to do to me? I didn't know them and they didn't know me - or did they? No, impossible.

Their leader, who appeared to be Joyce, whispered something to one of her friends. It proceeded like a chain reaction to the other students. When the final student had received the info, the entire building seemed to experience a tremor when they roared with laughter.

All kinds of thoughts invaded my mind. What were they planning? Will I live to see the sunrise? I suddenly grew afraid. I've got to get out of here! Where were those damned teachers? Where was God? What kind of a school is this anyway? Mother!

One of the larger boys moved in closer and began toying with my hair. This aroused in me an even greater anger. I jerked back but to the delight of the boy. Where the humor was, I was in no mood to find out. It was Joyce that spoke. "We have decided to put you to the test."

"What test?" I inquired nervously.

"Your initiation test."

"My what?"

"Initiation test. We're here to determine whether you belong here or not."

"I'm not taking any test."

"Yes you are if you wish to remain here. You will be given one of two grades - pass or fail."

"What happens if I fail?"

"LET'S HOPE it doesn"t come to that. But if it does, you will be justifiably punished."

"By who?"

"Why us, the Red Demons, of course."

"Red Demons?"

"Yes. We are turned on by the sight of red objects. Especially blood."

I shivered at their last statement. "You people must all be kind of weird. I never heard such nonsense before. I refuse to go through with it." My voice rose louder and louder in hopes of attracting a teacher.

"No one is going to hear you. The teachers have all gone home," assured Joyce.

"Gone home? That can't be, they have students here."

"We gave them the rest of the day off. We figured they were probably tired."

"You? What do you mean?"

"We are the authority here. They obey us."

"WHAT!"

"Never mind. You mentioned something about a refusal. Does that still hold?"

I pondered over the situation. They were actually serious. But I just couldn't go through with it. "Yes," I answered quickly.

"Then you leave us no alternative." Take her to the basement!" ordered Joyce in a contemptuous voice.

I was dragged unwillingly to that dark, wet hellhole and dragged inside. The light switch by the door was finally turned on to shed some light. I was shoved into the seat of a chair infested with gadgets. A huge belt was wrapped around my waist to strap me down. This was what technical science had labeled an electric chair and there I sat. I wasn't dealing with a bunch of amateurs, these were pros. My life rested in their hands, and that moment it didn't look too healthy. My mouth was taped through my helpless protests.

"There is 10,000 volts of electricity in this chair, enough for death to result instantaneously if you want it that way."

Death! God what is happening to me? I closed my eyes for what was to come. I shook my head in defeat and silently prayed for deliverance.

Someone must have started the chair. It felt like the after effects of an earthquake then it began to feel worse. I felt a queasiness in my head and stomach as the effects were beginning to be sensed.

I heard sounds of shock, disbelief, and sorrow. Some of which I couldn't tell was inferred. I didn't really care. I began to slip into a total state of oblivion. They had chosen for me to die slowly. This was the most painful of all. If you are going to kill me, do it as quickly as possible. I wanted to shout that at the top of my lungs but something stopped me. It wasn't just the tape on my mouth. So this was what dying was like. I certainly didn't want to experience it in this fashion - yet I didn't have too much choice. This was it! I could feel it. That decisive volt struck me directly in the head as I terminated my confession to God. Goodby lovely world.

What was this? I was being repeatedly shaken. Where was I? Stop! Stop! I opened my eyes to have them fall directly on my mother. "Wake up child. You have overslept on your very first school day."

But it couldn't be. That wasn't a dream. It was all so real. I looked at my alarm clock. Why hadn't it gone off? Or had it? My mother said she had turned the alarm clock off because it looked like I wasn't going to. Yet, I had never heard it, or had I? It's possible that I was so emotionally entangled in this dream that I had heard it and thought it to be part of it. I thought about the fact that I still had to go to school and this dream certainly hadn't helped matters any. This was only a dream! It could never happen! Where would a bunch of 12 and 13 year olds possibly get an electric chair?

I got out of bed and opened the curtains. The sun was shining beautifully and it looked like it was going to be a very nice day.

- Gloria Adams -

Disco Joe
or
What's A Disco Baby?

The American Heritage Dictionary defines baby as : (1) a very young child; infant. (2) the youngest member of a family or group. (3) one who acts like an infant. (4) Slang, a girl or young woman. Disco is defined as: a phonograph record. So technically, a Disco Baby would be a "young phonograph record."

But, Joseph G. McMahon, assistant manager of Just Pants in Bolingbrook is considered by the employees and people on the "side lines" as "Disco Joe" or "Disco Baby." Being six feet five, one hundred and seventy-nine pounds, with his dark brown, neatly-styled hair and greenish-blue, contact-corrected eyes - Joe definitely has no resemblance to a phonograph record. Even though he sometimes fulfills the third definition of baby, he's not an infant - not at age twenty-one. He's not the youngest of his family nor is he a woman.

So what's a Disco Baby? Well, take an average male or female who likes to dance, dress them in some fancy clothes, teach them a variety of dances to a wide selection of songs and then stick them in a downtown Chicago discotheque and ta-da - instant "Disco Baby."

Being a Disco Baby isn't that simple. As Joe would say, "A Disco Baby isn't a no-good "hippy freak" looking for a place to "cop a buzz." Nor is a discotheque just a hang out for strung-out freaks.

A Disco Baby isn't just an ordinary, everyday, run of the mill person who likes to dance. Talent and appearance seem essential to Joe.

Joe has a few qualifications and standards he feels he must keep up to remain a Disco Baby.

Joe is very particular about his appearance. He hasn't always been slim. He once had a good sized "spare tire" for a belly. But even before he lost a noticable seventy pounds, he took pride in his appearance.

One of Joe's outfits (like most of them) would consist of the following: first a "Nik-Nik" shirt, which is an expensive print dress shirt. His pants would be a solid color knit, also very expensive. Joe would usually get soaked for some extra bucks for tailoring (because of his long legs.) He needs a thirty=eight inseam. Since his pants are "Boulet" brand, the price is again influenced a few more bucks. His neck is accented by 18 kt. gold chains, while his feet (despite his height) are in platforms. And around him is a distinct scent of "Armais" cologne. Also considered an ultimate characteristic of a Disco Baby.

Joe's favorite Discos are all of class and he has a variety: Faces, Phoenix, Bullwinkles, Bo-Jangles and his favorite, BBC. Joe usually goes on Fridays and Saturdays. He is well known and envied because of his dancing talent. The Bus Stop, Hollywood, Salsa, Zodiac, Arrow Moon Walk, Jaws are just a few of the many dances Joe can do smoothly, plus various combinations of dances.

Dancing is an art to Joe. He takes pride in his dancing, and his pet peeve is those who take advantage of dancing. He has nothing against people who try to dance. After all, not everyone can be a good dancer. What Joe can't stand is people who just move with no sense of rhythm or feeling. He calls those people "Rose" and the dance they are attempting is called "Rose" in memory of a former employee who danced awkwardly.

Not all his time is devoted to dancing. Joe always keeps up with the latest fads, such as, shaving his chest and burning his underwear, which happens to be the latest announcement he made at work. Joe also manages to fit in a cruise or two every year plus a few "week long" trips.

Joe will soon be leaving the Disco scene in Chicago and move to Texas. But Joe will adjust rapidly as long as he has a few choice discos and a back-room to practice in. He'll be well adjusted even if "Disco, Step by Step" falls through.

"Disco, Step by Step" is a program where the latest dances are explained. It's presently being broadcasted in Chicago. Chances are Joe will be the "Step by Step" star in Texas, regardless if the show is broadcast or not.

- Cheryl McCutcheon -

You Interfere!

You interfere!
Thoughts of you pulsate through my mind!
I can't concentrate!
You dominate my consciousness!
Unbidden! Unwanted!
You rule my subconscious
Manifesting your presence in my dreams.

I think I've conquered another.
A smile - a word and I'm lost again.
I pray for release from this torture
But yet I savor it.

You are wonderful!
I desire your friendship!
But if these unwelcome emotions persist
I will avoid you!
I can not exist in constant turmoil
With images of you demanding my attention!

- Anonymous -

Gerald Ford: Fear and Damnation

Our school books have lied to us. Power in America does not rest with the people, who vest it in their government for the common good. True power over social and economic destinies is held by a small, closed corporate class undergirded by a global network of business operations. Government functions to maintain an environment conducive to profit for the corporations while keeping the governed in harness as consumers. The recent State of the Union address well documented this. An intolerably high unemployment rate is now incorporated into the federal government's economic planning despite the profound damage done to human lives by job loss. The budgets of programs to feed, educate and heal Americans will be cut to reduce government expenditures. Yet the complex of arms manufacturers known as "the defense industry" is promised 8.3 billion dollars in fresh government business.

Gerald Ford, as President, is the titular head of the American Establishment based on the above dynamics. Mr. Ford's future in this post is tied to his political popularity. High approval ratings from the public and invincibility within his political party may earn Ford another term in the White House. But Mr. Ford's public esteem is sliding downward while he faces a stiff challenge from one flank of his own party. Further, the President's predicament symbolizes a crisis of American values of supreme significance.

The job of President requires Mr. Ford to impress two messages upon the public: "Buy more" and "Don't worry." Obedience to the first command keeps our capitalist economy healthy. Obedience to the latter protects the oligarchies which monopolize the nation's wealth and power.

The public response to these exhortations is not uniform. Some people are outraged and retaliate with boycotts, court suits, guerilla warfare, political campaigns, and other orthodox and unorthodox means of reforming society. Another small group fervently clutches the banner raised by the President and unfurling it across newspaper pages and luncheon daises, gratefully apes Mr. Ford's affirmation of faith. Public opinion polls and personal experience claim that the majority of Americans react in neither extreme style. Most men and women simply shrug their beaten shoulders and reluctantly conclude that their Commander in Chief is ignorant of the true state of the Union.

Mr. Ford sporadically displays a vague awareness of this uneasiness in his land and its political ramifications for him. He has waded into crowds of common folk and convened huge conferences with representatives of middle class organizations in a pathetic search for a grip on the national consciousness. Enlightenment eludes the President precisely because of the sinews of his long, successful career.

Sent to the Congress twelve times by the religious voters of a conservative Midwestern city, Jerry Ford developed a narrow, parochial philosophy based on partisan combativeness and an impenetrable belief in the American system. Enduring success with the voters secured a Congressional leadership post for him. This position further diminished Mr. Ford's contact with anyone powerless or disaffected. The years preceding his Presidency found Jerry Ford securely wound within a cocoon that had grown progressively thicker as he and Grand Rapids had come to take each other for granted.

Suddenly, wretched events thrust Mr. Ford into an exorcising process as mechanistic as his redundant political success. The consequences of this awkward development are now upon us. The demands of the office obviously outstrip the abilities of the occupant.

While the President gropes for acceptance, devoid of insight, the irrelevance of the Presidency plagues the nation. The President feels fearful as the people feel damned. Both feel a sense of loss as a lifetime's belief in America erodes. The failure of our leader to understand the causes of the public desperation heralds chaos of unpredictable duration but certainly bitter resolution.

- Patrick McGuire -

Two in Twelve

We started at moderate pace in the middle of the near turn. The building was on our right hand side as we ran counter-clockwise around the track. When I began I looked first to check, and yes, the midpoint of the goal posts was directly to my left. Bill checked his watch.

Bill jumped to the front. I let him lead almost always so he would pace me. Being in second place didn't bother me. I could "sit back" and follow and think at the same time. In the lead, I felt a responsibility to keep it and to set a vigorous pace. Also I couldn't see behind me. There was always more thrill in trying to attain the lead at the end than trying to hold it through the whole run. Our running wasn't really a race but sometimes it turned out to be because we were so closely matched.

Around the far turn, 220 yards away, a Loggins and Messina tune popped into my head. About three weeks ago I had first heard the album. It now was the only music I listened to. The music played in my head. It started, replayed, finished and replayed again in a jumble. My favorite parts came over and over again. In my head the music was perfect. What I wanted to hear, I heard. What I didn't want to hear didn't play. My mind didn't record perfectly, but what it played back was beautiful.

The tune always conjured memories of bicycling down country highways with my friends. From there my upcoming bike trip flirted through my mind. "One" clicked in my mind as we completed the first lap. I imagined riding up and over those majestic Rockies with that song ringing in my ears.

"Love and friends are all
you need in the end."

How I liked those lines. They were so true for me. Replay.

Bill suddenly was twenty feet ahead I quickened and lengthened the next fifteen paces and was then two yards behind again. The goon was taller than me and had longer legs. Using the same number of steps, I always fell behind "two." I timed his left foot with mine. His, mine, his, mine, his, mine, his, mine, his, mine, mine, his, mine, his, mine, his, mine, his, mine, mine, his, mine, his, mine. Let's see. I took eleven paces to his nine - the SOB. 11/20. I did 55% of the running, no wonder I was always so tired. Me 55% - him 45% - 10% difference. It's like if he rested 5% or one tenth of a mile and I weighed 300 pounds for a tenth. In other words, I carried that turkey for 528 feet whenever I ran two miles with him.

"Hey, Billy! When I run two miles with you I carry you about 528 feet so don't moan about being burnt out on the last sprint. [illegible]

"Three," clicked off.

"What?"

"Never mind, Bill, it's a private joke. I'll explain it later."

"You're crazy, you know that?"

"Make me." I like throwing in things that make no sense at all. He looked back at me, oddly, with a smirk of understanding and said nothing.

I wonder if there is any truth to those calculations. We both weigh 150 and we both run two miles; energy expenditure must be equal. Well, it's something to occupy my mind.

"Love and friends
are all you need in the end."

It's Barb's album. I'm going to buy my own as soon as I can afford to blow five bucks. I took a deep breath and thought of Barb. Running was the time I thought of her least. It's hard not to think of her.

A second wind took me over and I took the lead from Bill. When I first started running every day, my lungs took the main punishment. They felt "bronchially stretched" "choke burnt" and "rawed out." My thighs felt like a side of pig hanging on a meathood in the A & P. The day after hard running, my legs felt like they were composed of pain fibers instead of muscle fibers. Every step stretched and exercised the fibers, especially in my lower calf. Only sitting could put my pain fibers at ease. However, now running had little effect on me except making me sleepy.

My breathing was harder since I had accelerated around Bill. We had both speeded up. He was three feet behind me. There was a small nagging pain developing in my ankles and calves. Our faster than average pace caused it. My lungs, heaving about 85% capacity felt no pain yet.

From behind I heard, "that's a bad ass wind, on the first straightaway. It must be 25 miles an hour, as we run into it."

"For sure. It chews royal donkey dung as far as I'm concerned." I had to turn my head 90 degrees to the left to' be sure Bill heard my reply. "Six."

"Here we go again," and we dug into the wind. Human bullets plunging through a massive transparent marshmellow. The wind pushed into my gaping mouth. It felt like I was breathing under someone else's power. Air, I craved it. We were running fast now into the gate.

"We've gone about 9½ minutes; 2½ left."

"Shit, we're doing good, Bill. That's about - 90 second laps - 6 minute miles. I want to try - for two - in twelve minutes," I said as my breathing hindered me from speech. I sped up but not too fast as to burn out and die at the end.

"Bill," he didn't hear me. "Bill!" Tell me - when I got - 90 seconds left. Scream or something."

"Okay."

Pain was now everywhere; legs, lungs, right shoulder, feet. All that I could think was go - come on - get two in twelve! I heard and felt the dull thud of my feet repetitiously going thump, thump, thump, thump over and over again. It always happened like that at the end. My feet sang the "Last Half Mile Blues." All thoughts leave the mind except the pain and the thump, thump.

"Ninety seconds left."

Shit again. I had six hundred yards to go. I accelerated slightly again. Pain, thump, thump, pain, thump, thump. Over and over. "Seven." Last lap - gun lap. Around the curve and into the wind. I pushed. Come on. Only a minute left. Ages later the far turn melted away. The wind was in my face - three paces now on my side - seven paces - on my back. With 220 yards remaining, I knew I had about 30 seconds. I started to sprint. On my toes I ran like a deer, it seemed. But I knew it wasn't really too fast. When I sprint the pain disappears - it's pushed aside at least for a few seconds. My body becomes stunned to numbness. Movement is so intense nothing else exists. I pushed on, on. I peaked over my shoulder to help pass the time. Bill was only eight feet behind. "A, B, C - easy as 1, 2, 3; simple as you and me," I thought. PAIN, it hit me, AIR, I need it! Going full speed I thought. I kept pushing as hard as God would make my feet, legs, arm and chest move. "Two, four, six, eight, who do we appreciate? Twelve minute two milers! By the time I get to Phoenix I'll be DONE!"

I plopped into the grass of the football field for five minutes, lying on my back. I heard you can get more air quicker that way. It's true, too. My lungs were screaming like twin babies for their hours overdue formula. Air. I love it. Running, I hate it. Achieving, it's worth it.

"How fast, Bill?" Gulping gas, Bill chcked out eleven fifty-five.

"Great!"

My head throbbed as if it was filled with fluid and someone was pumping the brakes. The pain in my lungs was gone already. My body was being satiated by the incoming oxygen. Thank you lungs. Those babies ought to get the congressional medal for service above and beyond.

As my bodily activities slowed music replayed again inside.

. . . love and friends
are all you need in the end.
Growing,
the seed we're sowing
we're gonna keep it growing
as long as we can . . .

I like those words, so much truth it seems - but at times I don't know. Is that all? Bill was jogging his last lap as usual. I quit philosophizing.

"Hey, Turkey, REST!" Bill came around the last curve and we both walked inside to the showers. Two bodies in accelerated states. I felt proud, two in twelve. Great!

- Len Heine -

Samoan Idyll

False dawn approached as I made my way down the path from Alua's house, towards the beach and the small pier that served the village of Apia in American Samoa.

I continued down the curving path, contemplating the fact that on the afternoon tide we would leave this beautiful island, never, in all probability, to return. As I came about the last turn of the path, onto the beach, the sun had already turned the sky red, prior to its appearance over the horizon.

Pausing to look around at this spectacular display, I glanced briefly at my ship lying quietly at anchor, its white hull outlined against the still, dark waters. Turning towards the pier, I noticed a figure sitting on a bollard. I should have anticipated it, but hadn't. It was Tolofa!

Every morning she sat, waited, and gazed with love and longing upon Nelson, the bowhook of the whaleboat. Every morning at sunrise the boat came to the pier, ostensibly to pick up mail, but in reality to pick up those of the crew who had by some means struck up an alliance or dalliance with some Polynesian beauty,

Quickly, my mind raced to what strategy I could use on this lovely creature, who was the object of lustful desire by most of the male population of both the village and the visiting ship. But no blandishments whatsoever swayed her. She had eyes only for Nelson, who was eighteen, shy, naive, and did not or could not comprehend her silent devotion.

I quickly approached her and engaged in some inconsequential conversation. We walked down off the pier and a short distance along the beach, my mind still searching for some way to induce her surrender to my passions. Outright physical attack was out of the question, as apprehension and punishment would surely follow.

Suddenly the answer appeared. Even in the short months of our visit, we had learned some of the culture of our hosts. The women selected their mates, in a rather fickle manner to our eyes, but there was one situation where they were vulnerable to the males. When they were totally naked, they had no recourse legally or culturally to resist.

Continuing my seemingly innocent talk, I casually approached her side and with a quick flip, undid her lava-lava and tossed it into the sea. For a startled moment both of us stood paralyzed, she in utter astonishment and I, frozen into immobility by this seductive and alluring creature. Never had I beheld such beauty. There we stood, but suddenly, before I could grab her, she bounded out of reach and raced up the beach to the pier, and along the road leading to the village.

The view of her streaming hair and bouncing butt as she disappeared into the village has haunted my imagination these past forty years. Even as I stood in perplexed horror that the most golden opportunity of my life had slipped out my hand, my subconscious mind restored the sound of the approaching ship's boat, and never, never would I again see Tolofa.

- Frank Kodrick -

Log Entry: Haiti, Final Day

There is a curious natural phenomenon that few men know about, let alone have witnessed. When the sun rises over the ocean, if all the variables align, the first few direct rays appear to be Kelly Green. Among people in my profession, such a sighting is very prestigious.

The climate here in Haiti is most conducive to this happening, and we have decided that we should make every effort to take advantage of our last day here; besides, an ocean sunrise will make a good lead photograph for our story.

Jack Shelton has been with the National Geographic Society as a photographer for over twelve years. He has more awards for his work than any other regular staff member. He has been to the North Pole, Mt. Everest, and Southeast Asia, every country in Western Europe, Northern Africa, the Middle East, and all of the Americas, except Cuba.

"Hand me some Plus-X."

"Where is it?"

"Green bag, on the left."

"I don;t see it."

"That's because your cranial - rectal inversion is interferring."

"My WHAT?"

When Jack explains things to me, his Louisiana lilt turns to Washington correspondent crispness.

"You've got your head up your ass."

Robert Vernon Pflug, BA University of Minnesota, MA University of Chicago, three years with the San Francisco Chronicle, and I'm going to let him shoot a sunrise with black and white.

"Sorry, what's up?"

"Your mind, at least it's not in this boat."

"Well, I guess that I'm still asleep."

"Heads up. It won't be long now."

In another hour, we had our sunrise, I had my coup, and we were back in our cabin on the beach making breakfast.

"Let's go for a dive."

"Sounds like a good idea, if you're awake. I don't want any sleepy company on the ocean floor."

"Don't worry. I'm alright now. Those pancakes smell good."

Jack makes excellent pancakes, as a matter of fact, Jack is a good cook, period. I think he has as many recipes as he has pictures. When he got here last week, the first thing he did was to throw me out of the kitchen. He won't even let me help clean up. I do offer from time to time, though, to be sociable about it.

"Here you go, my boy, Bavarian pancakes, Hatian fruit salad, and Bedouin-Sinai coffee."

"Now that's what I call a meal!"

"If only we had some Vermont syrup."

"Too fattening."

We spent breakfast going over the story, and planning our dive. Jack remembered a small key just about a mile beyond where we shot the sunrise, and we figured that it might have some good diving. As Jack tidied up his kitchen, I loaded the Whaler, and checked the equipment.

The most convenient way to get to this little village is by water. There are no roads for about six miles, only twisted little mountain paths. This island is mostly up and down. LaSalle Peak is ten miles from the Caribbean shore, and rises to 8,773 feet. Twenty miles to the East is Lake Enriquillo, 131 feet below sea level. We take the boat eight miles down the coast for fuel, mail and most supplies. Most of the goods are brought into this spot by mule train from a main highway.

At 9:30, we set out. Now that the story was written, and the pictures were taken, we have just one day to pack, but we figured that we could spend the morning taking a little detour.

We circled the island once, then decided to drop anchor on the leeward side of the island, at the end of a long reef. We put on our gear, made a final check and dove into the warm Caribbean. We snorkled along the surface, looking for a good descent. At the seaward tip of the reef, the face dropped off about seventy feet to the shelf. We both took our mouthpieces and started down.

The sea was calm, and we found no strong underwater currents. The reef was out in force, putting on its best display. (Of course, that's one of the benefits of working for the Society.) If you don't dive, you never know what real peace and quiet is like. There is no freedom like weightlessness. There is no companionship like a pair of divers.

About fifty yards from where we intersected the shelf, we noticed a large cave, and we decided to go exploring. At the entrance, there were some cuts in the rocks, like a minisub had misjudged its approach, or been swept inside by an unfriendly current. The marks ran for about fifteen feet, until the cave widened . . . It was then that we noticed that our cave was actually a tunnel; light was showing through about sixty feet ahead, and ten feet above the entrance. We followed a pair of angel fish half-way, then they turned toward the bottom. With the depth guages reading fifty-five feet, we were astonished to find that we broke the surface. Our tunnel opened into a large cavern, and the sunlight came from twelve large overhead arc-lamps. There was a dock on the opposite side of the cavern, and a large door just behind it. Jack nudged my shoulder:

"I think we missed a NO TRESSPASSING sign, shall we check?"

I nodded concurrence.

At seventy-five feet, we encountered a large section of chain-link fence which wasn't there thirty seconds ago.

Like it or not, we were someone's guests. When we resurfaced, the overhead door was open. We swam over to the dock, and climbed up the ladder. We hung our flippers from the scuba release straps, and looked around. The whole place was absolutely barren, not even a cigarette butt.

"What do you think?" Jack was the first to speak.

"Well - A. Eccentric billionaire; B. Smugglers, direct descendants of Bluebeard or L. J. Silver; C. CIA; D. Cuban commies; or E. None of the above."

"It would make a nice spot for a restaurant, though."

"Very romantic."

"I'll cook, you wash dishes, and we'll hire some shapely native girls to wiggle among the tables."

"Let's go see the rental manager."

Behind the dock, and the overhead door, was a room about the size of four two-car garages, two on each level. Along one side was a stairway that led to a catwalk, that in turn led to a small steel door. Along the other side empty shelves ran the length, and about eight feet up, at the far end, on the narrow wall were two doors, about eight feet apart, and centered.

"The lady or the tiger?"

"Jack will take the lady," gesturing to the door in front of him, and you can have the pussy."

We walked to our chosen doors, and rested one hand on the knob, the other on our knives. We took simultaneous deep breaths, looked at each other, and on Jack's nod, pushed. I grabbed the knob hard, twisted with steady even motion and put my shoulder to the task. Nothing. Jack was having about the same luck.

"How about the penthouse?" I asked, pointing toward the catwalk.

"Right now, I'd rather be working for them." Jack nodded as he spoke, and we crossed to the base of the stairs.

"As if you could survive shooting in an air-conditioned, automatically-humidified, hermetically-sealed studio."

"No, you got it all wrong. I'd do location stuff."

"Keep this one in mind."

"I think I'll leave this one to Playboy."

At the end of the catwalk, we had better luck. The door swung open easily to reveal what must have been the security room. Four televison monitors showed the cavern, and room outside. A row of switches and lights were underneath. One of the lights was blinking.

"Ten to one, that's the fishnet."

"Let's see." Jack threw the switch above it.

It was the overhead door. When it was completely shut, Jack returned the switch to its original position and the door went back up.

"Jimmy the Greek, your job is secure."

The first six from the right were for the lamps at the top of the cavern. The next for the lights in the garage. The eighth was for the lights in the security room. Experience had taught us that the next was for the overhead door.

"Okay, boy blunder, go see, I'll push buttons."

As I reached the bottom of the stairs, the entire cavern was plunged into darkness. My entire body coiled. My fist wrapped itself around my knife handle. My ears almost burst from listening for a foreign breath, or a menacing footstep.

"Twelve is the master."

My heart will never be the same again. I walked to the first door.

"Okay!"

"Well?"

"Nothing."

"Now?"

"NO!"

"Shit. Next."

"Okay!"

"Well?"

"Nothing."

"Now?"

"NO!"

A litany of international vulgarities, obviously well-practiced, erupted from the security room, and lasted until I crossed the catwalk.

"What now, Fatman, I'd light a signal fire, but my matches have gotten wet."

The tension was getting to us. We couldn't hold it back with light-hearted remarks any longer.

"Smoke - " Jack turned around slowly. There must be some sort of ventilation system."

"It's worth a try."

We walked out onto the catwalk, and began to survey the garage. The farther door was slightly ajar. I touched Jack's arm, and pointed. We both took another glance around the room, started down the stairs with our knives drawn and held low along our thighs. At the bottom, I turned toward the dock, not wanting anyone to slip up behind us. Jack walked to the door, and tried to see through the crack.

"A hallway and a stairwell," he whispered as I came up on the other side of the door. "I didn't see anyone."

I hit the door as hard as I could. The echo of the steel door hitting the concrete wall was deafening in the narrow corridor. Jack came rushing past me and stopped halfway up the hallway behind a support. Taking the cue, I ran for the base of the stairs and slid into the narrow wedge beneath them. Jack came quickly behind me.

SLAM! The door at the end of the corridor was shut.

SLAM! A fire door by Jack's post followed.

SLAM! From somewhere above.

"Time to lose some weight."

Jack released his tank, and stripped off his weight belt. I wasn't far behind him. He then stripped the weights from the belt, threaded his mask, snorkle, and flippers. As soon as I was similarly attired, Jack grabbed his knife, and burst up the stairwell. I followed.

The door at the top of the stairs was locked, of course, but there was a trap door at the top of the wall. Jack backed against the wall directly underneath it, and laced his fingers just under his stomach. I took his boost, and went on to his shoulders and pulled the release. The door swung down, followed b y a folding ladder. From the landing, we could see that a narrow passage led to an escape chamber.

"I guess we over-stayed our welcome. I'll go get the tanks."

As Jack walked down the stairs, I climbed into the chamber. There were two hatches, upper and lower, a steel ladder, a large valve, and two pressure guages. I glanced down at my fathometer, 40 feet, and my watch: 10:45, we wouldn't even be out of air, yet.

"Come 'ere." Jack was on the landing, refitting his gear. "What do you think?"

"It looks like the real thing, just like in the movines." I climbed down beside him. It didn't take us long to get into the gear, then into the chamber. We checked the regulators, and fittings, then Jack sealed the lower hatch.

"One way or the other, we'll be out of here soon."

"I figure we've got about 35 minutes of air left."

"That sounds a little optimistic, especially at my pulserate. Let's call it 30 and hope."

Jack just shook his head and bent down to the valve.

"Lend a hand."

Both of us, in various combinations of leverage couldn't get it to budge.

"This is a real shithole."

"The Shithole Restaurant, Key Gonave, Haiti, sounds like a very romantic setting." I stepped on the second rung of the ladder, and tried the top hatch. Nothing. Jack tried the bottom, Nothing.

"Three to nothing. The vote is 'Lock'."

"Jack, we forgot the password."

"Open sesameeeee."

Nothing.

"Pleeeeeeze open sesameeeee."

Seawater began gushing in around our feet.

"FUCK!" In unison.

The pressure guages on the far wall began climbing, as the water was coming in faster than the air was escaping. By the time the water got to chest level, they started to recede, and some of the pain left my ears and throat. When we were floating six inches or so from the ceiling, we cleared our mouthpieces, and started sucking bottled air.

The chamber filled all the way, but the top hatch didn't open. Jack motioned to his fathometer, and to the guage on the wall. It took about two minutes for the readings to relate, then a loud metal click, and a rush of bubbles. The top hatch was free.

We were about thirty feet from the surface and twenty feet from our anchor. We headed straight for the Whaler. When we got back aboard, we discovered two things. First, the boat had been moved about four-hundred yards along the reef. Second a large manilla envelope was taped to the wheel.

"Fan mail, from some flounder?"

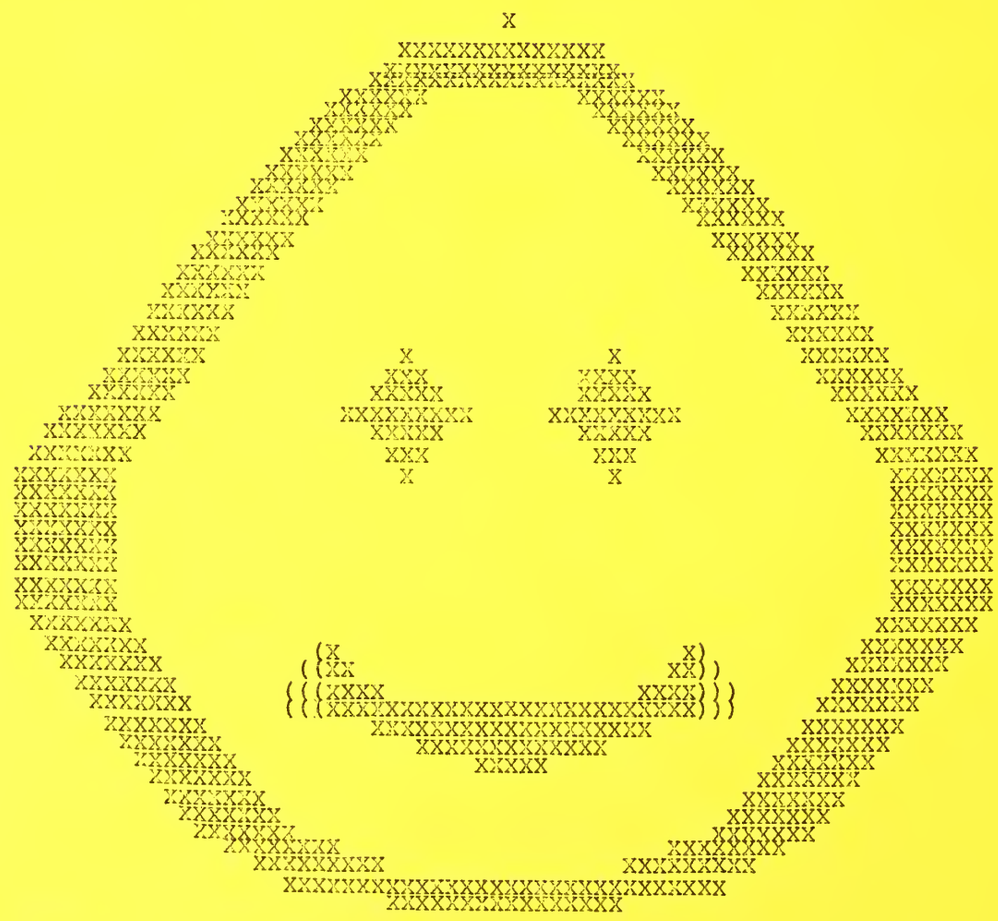
"Starkist wants us."

"An IPA letter bomb?"

"Worse, your draft notice, kid."

Inside were four sheets of computer print-out. The first two told our life stories, from date, time and place of birth through our morning's photographic trip. The third sheet had the following:

LOG ENTRY: HAITI, FINAL DAY
9:00 CST DEPART: KEY GONAVE.
SCUBA ACTIVITY. DOWN TIME: 35.
NO INCIDENTS. RETURN TO BASE
11:20.



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H  H AAAA V  V E      AAAA NN N  I  C    E    D  D AAAA   Y  Y |||
HHHH AAAA  VV  EEE    AAAA NNNN  I  C    EEE  D  D AAAA    YY  |||
H  H A  A  VV  E      A  A N NN  I  C    E    D  D A  A    YY  |||
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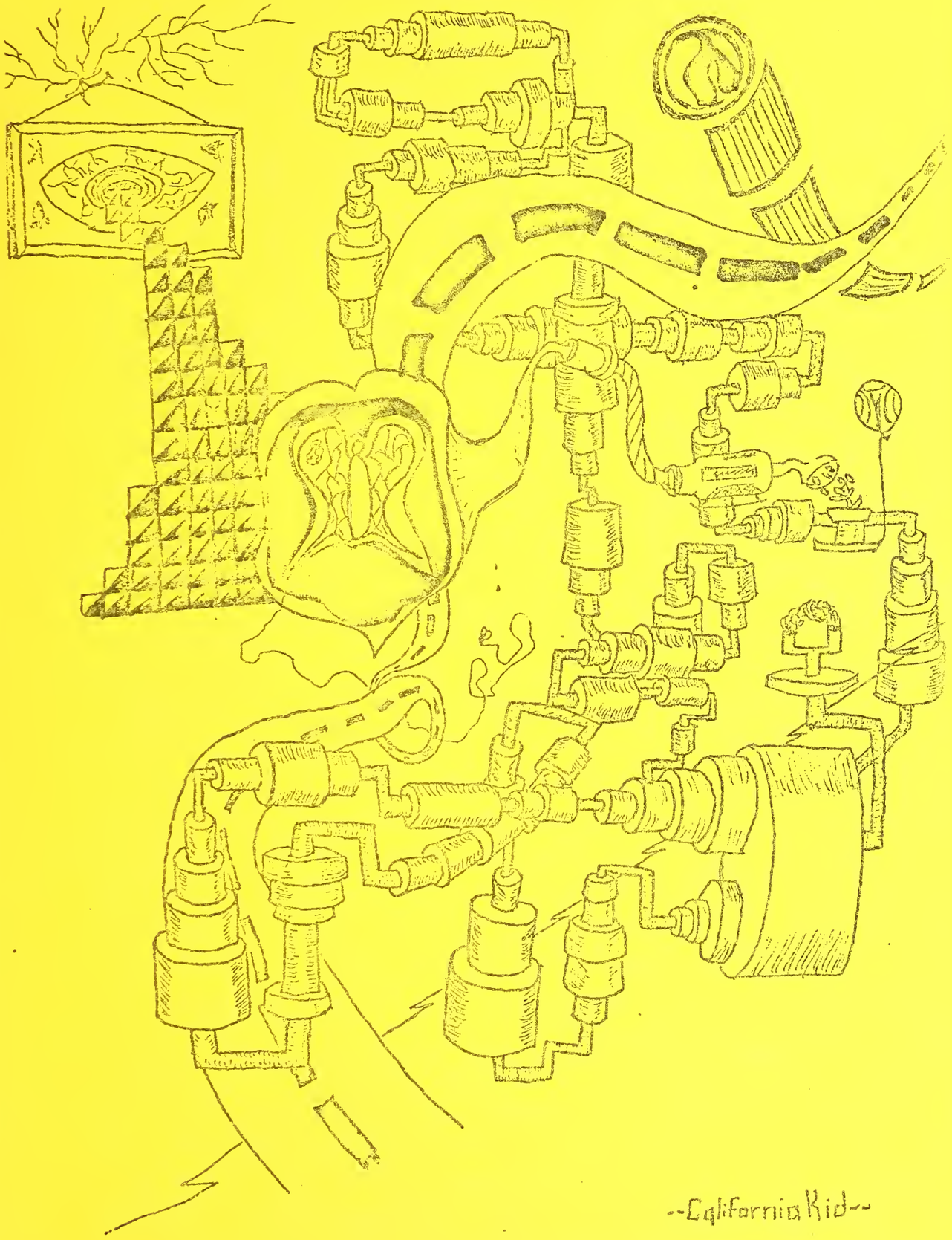
- Scott Cheffer -


--California Kid--

WORDEATER 15

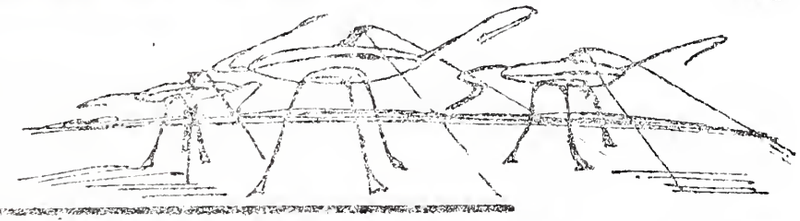
LOOK! DOWN THERE — BEFORE MY EYES!

IS IT A SCRAP OF PAPER?
IS IT A TEN-DOLLAR BILL?

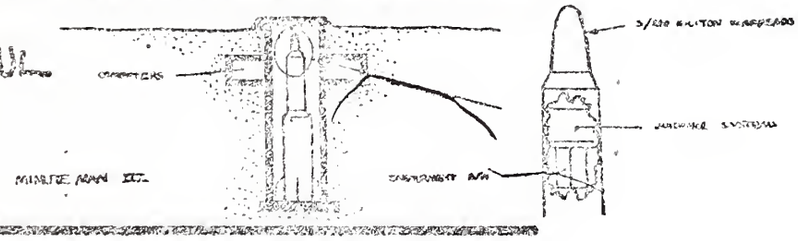
NO!

IT'S THE WORDEATER

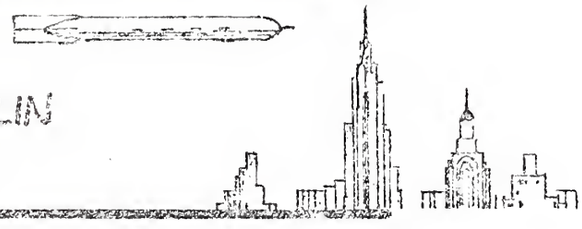
FASTER THAN
A DEATH-RAY



MORE POWERFUL
THAN A MIRV
WARHEAD



CAN EVEN LEAP
HIGHER THAN A ZEPPLIN
IN A SINGLE BOUND



YES, THE WORDEATER — BROUGHT TO THIS COLLEGE BY STRANGE BEINGS FROM ANOTHER PLANET. ALTHOUGH DISGUISED AS ORDINARY PAPER, THE WORDEATER POSSESSES POEMS AND SHORT STORIES FAR BEYOND THOSE OF MORTAL PUBLICATIONS.

THE WORDEATER — FIGHTING A NEVER ENDING BATTLE FOR TRUTH, JUSTICE, AND THE AMERICAN WAY!

E. LOVEKAMP 2-22-76

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WORD-EATER 15

STAFF FOR WORDEATER XV

Pat Bohler, Michael Markwell, and Sharon Marizza (Student Members) John Stobart (Faculty) and Loud Mouth McCracken (Ubiquitous, Omni-present, sometimes obnoxious, but never unconscious)

Wordeater awards will be given for Wordeaters XV and XVI in the next edition. Submission deadline for Wordeater XVI is May 8, 1976. Submit Manuscripts, Poems, Cover Designs (on 8½" by 14" paper with 1" margins) to J. Stobart, C1069 by May 8, 1976 to qualify for the awards.

The $10 awards for front and back cover designs for Wordeater XV were won by Love Kamp and Jan Emerson.

John Stobart is the sole (and lonely) judge for the awards. The entire staff selects contents for Wordeater.

Alone Now

Often
I think of my position of solitude
being far beyond yesterday's dreams,
having said goodbye
    to the lovers that dwelled in my heart,
leaving the places
    I held deepest meaning for.
Empty rooms are filled with unfamiliar faces
the sun no longer streams through the window
when once, the sun never set.
I heard somewhere,
    that joys are never wholly felt
until one has experienced pain and hurt.
I am alone now
    feeling pain
        knowing hurt
sharing with myself
the knowledge yesterday outlines,
learning to live
on the basis of change - -
    the only permanent factor in
        existence.

- Linda Bohm -

B.B.C.

Open your eyes -
find the pieces of sunlight
that fall only upon wonder.
Today is only a moment
in the vastness of forever
but today possesses gifts
that eternity overlooks.
Tomorrow's promises may be broken -
but my kiss need not promise.

Penny for your thoughts
share with me, only yourself -
the wonders a heart can contain - all at once.
It's surprising.
Open wide your arms
if only for a moment.
Caress my trembling heart
with the beauty of today.
You'd never know what is behind my smile
but I'd tell you if you asked.

I'd love to kiss you awake
just to say hello.

Today's treasures,
the touching of souls in the smallest
slice of time
seen only by pieces of sunlight
and
    you and I.

- Linda Bohm -

It's Not That I Don't Care

If I appear to be
past recognition -
don't worry,
I'm still alive.

If by chance
your touch leaves me unawakened
realize,
I'm slow to respond.

If you say, hello!
and I don't hear you
don't mind,
I've been quiet lately
it's not that I don't care.

If I leave you
with a feeling of perplexity
don't wonder at all;
I'm not being rude
I simply don't want your obligation to me
or to leave any expectations with you.

- Linda Bohm -

Jack and Jill

Jack and Jill went up the hill
To fetch a pail of water.
But, oh poor Jill forgot the Pill.
Now little Jack's a father!

- Pam Heavens -

Concourse Talk

Wow, did ya see Betty's new boyfriend...
how'd she get him...my brother said he'd
introduce me to a friend of his course he
hasn't yet...got a comb this hair's a
mess I really should get it cut...thanks
...Ann's getting married in June I said 2
she was stupic...oh get me a Coke too...
but she wouldn't listen some people don't
stop to hear common sense...good I've
got time to tell ya about Joan and Steve
...thanks for the pop...anyway she said...

And the flip-top tab missed the garbage can.

- Pam Heavens -

Eucalyptus

Ancient fragrance
Earthy and clean
Pungent and fresh
Fills me with images
Lost forgotten scenes
Dreams visions
Olfactory memories
Lone ago - -

- Janellen Little -

Dilema

Pierce my mind
Fill my soul
Will you let me go?

I am the one - not you!
That holds on fast
Clutching and screaming - to be free!

- Janellen Little -

Sunset's Veil

The day is lonely
When the sky is grey.
The hours drag by in an endless way.

When the sun finally sets
at the end of the day
It's orange and red
and lavender grey.

But is it really
Lavender grey
or do my tears make it seem that way?

- Barb Bush -

Thank You

I must hurry and go now, but before I do I want to thank you.
Thank you for making me the person I am.
Thank you for caring about me.
Thank you for Saturday nights and beer parties.
Thank you for the love of a man I thought I'd never find.
Yes, thank you Life, thank you for these glorious years.
But, as you see, Death is at my door -

And I can no longer keep him waiting.

- Pam Heavens -

I Can't

I can't write of love because I've never
experienced it.
I can't write of lobster because I've never
tasted it.
I can't write about Paris because I've never
been there.

It's time I started experiencing...tasting...
and travelling.
Would you like to join me?

- Pam Heavens -

To Emily Dickinson
(After Visiting Her Home)

You were not in your kitchen setting daily loaves to cool,
Nor viewing life through favored corner windows.
I did not meet you in the orchard where you strolled each day,
Or on the east lawn where your flowers bloomed.
You were not walking on the path "just wide enough for two"
when I walked there;
Yet you breathe life throughout your "songs," fragmented, bound by
tender threads, each time I read your "letter to the world."

- Michael Markwell -

On Being Born

Without the least intent of growing old
I lost the ease of laughter I once knew;
I ceased regarding strangers as new friends
And trusting friends as though they trusted me.
The change required no effort on my part:
Peace fell away by pieces through the years.
Mankind, I found, possessed an ugly side
That all my good intentions could not change.
And when at last, despaired of finding hope,
I'd faced corruption in my heart as well,'
I gave the Lord my deadness for the cross
And in exchange He gave me a new birth.
In flesh alone there's naught but slow decay;
In Jesus Christ are life and hope and peace.

- Michael Markwell -

Regress

Come and sit beside me here
On this sunny hill.
Watch the passing clouds become
Anything you will.

Watch the butterflies and bees
Dancing in the sky.
You can see with children's eyes,
If you really try.

Smell the earth and grass below,
Taste a tender blade.
Know the things the children know -
Everything God made.

- Michael Markwell -

October Light

The leaves, though herald in their bud
And psalmody in summer breeze,
Transcend themselves as autumn's dawn:
Crisp, fragrant rays among the trees.

- Michael Markwell -

Review
(To the Author of my soul, with love)

Though this is certainly not Your greatest masterpiece, Your recent revision of the rough draft is very promising.

I especially liked the introduction of the three-dimensional Character at the end of the first chapter. He redeemed the entire work from its initial dull, plodding, confused theme, and made the whole thing come to life.

The frequent fore-lighting of the happy ending is also a delightful touch.

- Michael Markwell -

Turnabout

Since women's lib, a dam has burst,
Unwanted love imbuing
Unto the fellow from the lass:
He's chaste, and she's pursuing.

- Michael Markwell -

Priorities

Alas, poor girl, she thought their love
Was purely transcendental;
To him, the fact she had a mind
Was just coincidental.

- Michael Markwell -

Neo-Eden

Will you hide from Him
When He walks through your personal garden
Or apologize and start over again?

- Michael Markwell -

Irony

Has a God of love and grace
Created us for dying?
That would seem illogical,
And most dissatisfying.

"Male and female created He them."
Their issue kills its brother;
Old and dying, sick and lost,
Create we one another.

- Michael Markwell -

Proximity

Proximity of mortal form
Does not ensure the heart;
How often, when the flesh draws near,
Souls glance and move apart.

- Michael Markwell -

Perspective

No sea is deeper than the Self,
Nor sky is wider than the I;
Yet God can fill vast chasms up -
Expansive Me can only try.

- Michael Markwell -

Keep It Short

Ten zeros multiplied by ten
Increase their value not a bit;
Verbosity does not exceed
Economy of word, plus wit.

- Michael Markwell -

Whimsy

I seem to recall
in the glass on my wall
(once while viewing my doubtful physique)

A familiar hat prop
that perched there on the top
was inviting my studied critique.

My thoughts flew away
in a whimsical way
lost in musing the use of head

What things does it do?
It's not just meant to
fill the space at the head of my bed.

It: carries a grin
(there I tuck my food in);
gives my nose an admirable perch;

Makes caves for my eyes,
and is of such a size
as to fit in new headgear for church.

Each side holds an ear . . .
A head does, it is clear
keep my neck from looking unfinished.

It faces the front -
to be painfully blunt
if it doesn't one's value's diminished.

It makes me seem tall,
and it won't even fall
if I hang by my heels just for fun,

but still there is more
my head was made for
even tho it's in fashion to have one.

My head is not there
just to hold up my hair,
or for keeping my glasses in place,

inside is a brain
which records joy and pain
in spans of incalculable space.

Within is the key
to this strange entity
"I" who sits here and struggles to give.

A quick peek inside,
a short fanciful ride
through part of this "sphere" where I live.

- Jan Emerson -

star light, star bright, go away! I'm tryin' ta sleep.

I see you,

what do ya get when ya buck into a brass doorknob, an' yer naked.

(messy)

elephants make strange bedfellows.

elephants always forget (they smoke dope)

elephants ain't nice when they sit on your face

Never look a gifted horse from the rear.

never look a gifted horse in the nose.

never look a gifted horse in the ear

never look a gifted horse cross-eyed

never give a gifted horse the bird.

never think about a gifted horse, 'cause there ain't none

I've got lots of friends somewhere

I've got lots of friends, but they died

I've lots of friends that don't like me

LOADED

I made a boo boo

The family that stays together is weird.

The family that stays together has anemic children.

The family that stays together are holy rollers.

The family that stays together soon goes crazy.

The family that stays together end up killing each other.

T

H

S

Lord take me downtown, I'm just lookin' for a quarter I lost.

Lord Take me downtown, I'm just lookin' for my brain. (it fell out of my ear)

Lord take me downtown, 'cause i'm too loaded to find my way.

Lord take me downtown, 'cause mommy and daddy won't.

Lord take me downtown I'm just lookin' for some

?

you know that one?

I know it's only rock 'n' roll, but who cares?

I know it's only rock 'n' roll, so the hell with ya'.

I know it's only rock 'n' roll, can I go home now?

I know it's only rock 'n' roll, so John Denver, go back to the farm. ← (?)

Do you know the way to the bathroom

Do you know the way home.

Do you know the way to your car

Do you know your name?

no

Thank God I'm alive.

Thank God I'm loaded.

Thank God the teacher likes me.

Thank God yer ol' man's rich.

Thank God I'm a city boy

Thank God for rock 'n' roll

Thank God for loose women when yer lonly.

Thank God for the beautiful woman at J.J.C.

(I need one!)

where would I be without my car.

where would I be without money.

where would I be without my platforms.

where would I be if I stayed on the farm.

where would I be without my lid.

where would I be without the B.G.'s.

(in a better place)

what do ya get when ya fall through an outhouse. (messy)

-- California Kid bit a piece of pie? --

- Jan Emerson -

Betshen

Untrodden woodlands lie beyond
the rhythyms in your eyes.
In virgin, shifting, crystal chords
the circle of the skies
(A golden wedding ring of light)
will link your soul and mine
as through the lifting veil the imprints
of our minds entwine.
I of air and water.
You of earth and air.
Yet how strange to feel the strength
of all the fire there.
Torch-bearer of eternal flame
flash-burned away the rust
that held my doors closed tightly
and wouldn't let me trust.
No pressure could unlatch them
then the gentle breeze of you
silently insistently nudged in before
I knew.
It wasn't by intention - that
motioning soft air.
You didn't know you'd touched me -
didn't even care.
I couldn't let you pass, let you
go . . . unknowing
That you had opened up a room
of flowers I'd been growing.
So I sent the Garden's call
to play beneath the Sea,
in hopes that by the echoes
the waves would show you Me.
Long before you "saw" me I
knew many of your faces -
even when the masks are gone
they leave behind their traces.
Each of us are treasure chests
but spilled among our treasure
are items from Pandora's Box
disguised to look like pleasure.
We all have taken side roads
and fallen in the dirt.
Which of us can claim the right
to scorn a fall that hurt?
Each fall has written whispers
and written where it shows -
for those who read the language
and in the reading, knows.
Someday will we talk of falls
it took to gain our feet?
Will you and I in honesty
banish self-deceit?
Then standing clean and naked,
peaceful in the Sun
inflict no future wound but let
both of us be One?
I saw that Sun shine through you
and by its truthful ray
reflect back only beauty.
I see it more today.
Ungiven gifts, untouched fruit,
fenced in pasturland,
all that lies unformed in me will
soon rest in your hand.
The voice of Fear cries
"Caution! Life shifts and
changes fates. To keep from being
torn apart you've stayed behind
my gates."
I hear the voice and send back smiles
lent from that space above you
that links the stars and kisses
me . . . I know that I will love You.

Tides

My tides have brushed the shellfish
child fresh from oyster bay
who steps out freely on the air
and leaves her shell of clay.

Thoughts unfolding to the wind,
wild scattered bright seafoam,
as murmuring from silken nights
calls her on to roam.

A clustering of snowstars sheds
light to lure her feet.
Dank catacombs left far behind
she heeds the distant beat.

Of beckoning "Tomorrow's Land"
that still eludes her touch.
Only those who aren't yet
"Home" can realize how much

She longs for fields she left
behind milleniums ago,
or reaches out her fingertips
to know . . . to know . . . to know.

Know she does. Know she will. . .
by partial knowing learned
that freedom for the moments
spent. To shell land she's returned.

"Iron hand in velvet glove . . ."
The law must be fulfilled,
then evanescent scattered dreams
converge as ere they spilled

And melt away the prison shell -
vanished, as is time.
Eternal flight - her song a gift
a clearly echoed chime.

- Jan Emerson -

Simple Simplicity

"Keep it simple" so it's said
the plot, the verse, the song
"uncomplicated" then the work will
thrive and move along.

Well, simple is as simple says
and simple-minded be.
My thousand simple daily tasks
are quite enough for me.

"Simplicity is beauty". . .I'll not
dispute this point,
but even too much 'beauty'
throws one's senses out of joint.

Uneventful are my hours,
an elementary spree.
So writing verse I strive to voice
the complex part of me.

In words that flare and soar
and pulse, that tear and bend and sway,
that speak exacting as they can
just what I want to say.

Simple words may well suffice
describing junior's rash.
Descriptively they're valuable
as counterfeited cash.

What single word means quite the
same as "nascent"? - There, you see?
That's only one of multitudes which
speak specifically.

We'll reach this understanding
then between just me and you -
I won't use a dozen "simple" words
where one choice word will do.

- Jan Emerson -

Wondering

How much has changed since our beginning
When galaxies within me spinning
Collided, whirled, then split apart
In that part of mind that is the heart.

When colored lights like bouncing balls
Danced unrestrained though silent halls
And lit my being in their glow
(Strange fireworks that pulse and flow)
Kaleidescopic in their changing
melding, breaking, rearranging.

To change my thoughts of life and knowing
Through their recreation sowing
Seeds of hope, of fear,
of ecstasy
Of mind, of thought, of all
that's me.

How much has changed since
our beginning . . .?

- Jan Emerson -

Being or Not

Oh
I would weep
if I could,
but I am locked here
within society's fear
that people
are human.

- Bonnie Sayko -

Idol Dreams

She -
she is it,
Ms. of misses,
Queen of hits.
Upon her pedestal
admired by all
(so she says),
not about to fall.

She'll always know,
but can't confess,
that the only reason
for her success
is pedestal-placement
just to see up her dress.

- Bonnie Sayko -

Joshua's Horn Blues

Guitar chords echo down the hall
He sings his songs of love
I wonder about mine.
A-minor leads into C-major,

My harmonies turn to dissonance.
He closes his eyes
to emphasize
the truth that always seemed a lie,
"To love another
you gotta love yourself,
babe, I love you more each day."
He pledges himself to an unseen love,
I deny myself to everyone.
Oh please, I beg,
strum me too,
Turn me into a lover's poem ...
The wall I see
is inside of me,
I'll build it down
turn it all around.
"To love another
you gotta love yourself,"
I think I'll start today.

- Bonnie Sayko -

I Wish

My body flying through the air,
having perfect hair -
I wish.

Having the most beautiful, fastest car,
being an international star -
I wish.

Being a person women adore,
writing a hit musical score -
I wish.

Doing everything right,
from my palms, a flash of light -
I wish.

To have the strength of a hundred men,
to be popular once again -
I wish.

Project myself through time and space,
to conquer the human race -
I wish.

To have everything that is new,
to be loved by you -
I wish.

- California Kid -

Don't count your chickens before you eat them.
Don't count your chickens before you buy them.
Don't count your chickens before they rip your lips off.
(Don't count chickens)

People who live in glass houses shouldn't invite Ella Fitzgerald to dinner.
People who live in glass houses shouldn't have monster fights.

A stitch in time is worthless (I don't know what it means either)
A stitch in time saves your life.
A stitch in time saves your rear from freezing.

A bird in the hand is worth some tush on the side.
A bird in the hand is worth five dollars.
A bird in the hand is worth a little fertilizer.

Obey your elders, so you will be wrong too.

Early to bed, early to rise, makes a person dull, boaring, and a red neck.
Early to bed, early to rise, makes a person a groudparent

An apple a day causes constipation
An apple a day causes an apple shortage

An apple a day ruins your teeth.

A penny saved is worthless.
A penny saved is one cent.
A penny saved takes up room in your pocket.

A penny saved couses economic problems.

If at first you don't sucseed, get some one else to do it.
If at first you don't sucseed, cry. If at first you don't sucseed, forget it.
(forget them)

Yours is not to reason why, yours is just to go to the bathroom while you can.

Do as you're told, not what you think.

When all else fails, drop your class.
when all else fails, lie like hell.

Those who stop to think often get run over by trucks.

Do as you're told, and you get in trouble anyway.

Californic kid

Eagle In The Sky

Purple moon,
fifth of June,
eagle in the sky.
Comet soars,
lion roars,
fire in the sky.
Mourning at noon,
crooner's swoon,
fire in her eye.
Chevy chase,
tons of mace,
pollution's sonic boom.
Don's American pie,
soft sleek thigh,
falling to your doom.
It's his day,
fly away,
eagle in the sky.

- California Kid -

I AM THE ROCK
I WALK
ALONE
AND NEITHER WINDS
NOR SANDS OF TIME
SHALL STAY ME FROM MY PATH

I CANNOT TOUCH
I CANNOT CRY
BUT NEITHER DO I FEAR
THE IRON SLINGS
AND STEEL ARROWS
OF SIMPLE MINDED MEN
I AM THE ROCK
I WALK ALONE

THE SKY GROWS DARK
THE EARTH GROWS STILL
I AM THE ROCK
I AM
ALONE

- Richard Leclercq -

Desp
(A hand reaches out
and clasps the empty)
air

- Richard Leclercq

Retrospective

It seems like only yesterday
In myriads of ways
When Iron sang as Butterflies*
and Beatles were at play

New Orleans Jazz
Saint Louis Blues
Each city had its sound
and if you wanted Country
Nashville was your town

But Country Music doesn't sell in Nashville
They're diggin; Rock 'n' Roll in Tennessee
And when the Man
In Alabam'
Turns on the Radio
It's Elton John now
And not Phobe Snow

44 and 17* are numbers in a book
but in the days of NFL
the whole world stopped to look
East was East and West was West
A clear wall did divide
and even the oppressed had equal freedom to decide

But Country Music doesn't sell in Nashville
They're diggin' Rock 'n' Roll in Tennessee
and when the Man
in Alabam'
Turns on that radio
It's Elton John now and not Phobe Snow

The times they are a changin'
Sang Dylan and the Byrds*
When everybody sang along
and no one knew the words

It seems like only yesterday
In myriads of ways
Tomorrow is already here
and did not come to stay

Country Music doesn't sell in Nashville
They're diggin Rock 'n' Roll in Tennessee
and when the Man
in.Alabam'
Turns on that radio
It's Elton John now
and not Phobe Snow

*Iron Butterfly and the Byrds were superstars of the music scene in the early '60s. 44 was the number of Gail Sayers, and 17 was the number of Johnny Unitas, two famous football players of the early '60s.

- Richard Leclercq -

Unknown Quantity

Will you ever know what you're
made of if they accept you at face
value?

For to look beyond is past reality
and into a world that is unknown,

With its implications, demands
and its questions unanswered.

If the body is but a container
A Vehicle of the mind,
Then the mind is never changing
But stands to remain
untapped like a locked vault,
until one day in one body
a wall is broken down,
a bridge is crossed,
and from that day on, your life
will never be the same.
Because your mind will never know
any boundaries.
And the old self, just an image
of the past toward the spirit
of change.

II

How do we cross that gap,
that body of water whose
darkness matches the lack of
reasoning, but still beckons
the visitor on yonder shore?
Should I step off?

Not that I mind the water
But still can I survive without
support? The decision is
only mine, it's only my life.

III

Oh why do I hold on,
to this shell,
this vehicle,
this container of my mind?
Why do I think it so dear
As to be the real meaning of
my existence?

I know I only live for today
To satisfy self, for
self-satisfaction.
Where am I?

IV

It's dark, but warm and friendly
I am not alone and I feel
Like I'm flowing in all directions
A separation has occured
My mind is free, but I'm
in control.

I have but one thought
and only need one breath.

I can see myself through the
ripples on the surface.
Can that be me?
All shallow in feelings.
Why am I like that?
Who else did I hurt?
Is time running out?
Will you be there?

- Joseph Rozbesky -

On Nothing

The height of nothing, to turn completely inward, to analyze the reason for your very existence, and then only act in accordance with the results.

LAST WEDNESDAY YOU WERE A MILLION MILES AWAY
OR WAS IT TEN LIFE SPANS AGO
DID YOU RETURN TO YOUR FORMER SELF,
A WINGED IMAGE AT TEN THOUSAND
THE WIND YOUR DIRECTION
THE STARS YOUR GUIDE
TODAY, TOMORROW, NEXT YEAR
NEVER TO RETURN TO YESTERDAY
THE WORLD HOLDS NO DESIGNS
YOUR ONLY RESPONSIBILITY IS TO
YOUR MIND.

BUT THEN WE TALK
ONLY TO SAY NOTHING.
BUT WE SHOULD ANALYZE THE SILENCE
BETWEEN THE WORDS
BECAUSE IT HAS NO CLOTHES, AND
IT IS THE ESSENCE OF FRIENDSHIP.
IF PEOPLE HAVE TO TALK TO BE
TOGETHER, THEN THERE'S NO
REASON TO DREAM.

- Joseph Rozbesky -

The Answer

If you're telling me I'm so
wrong
Then you should be able to
Hold your candle to a black-
board
And expect a reflection . . .
Or could it be, your candle
If held high on top the hill
Won't even begin to illuminate
the universe . . .
But wait, if you look closely,
You just might be able to tell
The direction of the wind -

If it hasn't already extinguished
your light . . . . . .

- Joseph Rozbesky -

Yes, I Know.

Yes, I know,
sometimes.
You can't tame
the wind,
nor calm
the sea.
You can't make
a mountain dance for you,
nor make the
three moons cry.
You've learned
defeat,
as I told you
you would.
Look at me
please,
and don't give up.
Is it because
I love you
that
You try so hard?

- toad -

We Are

We are but a passing thought
in the world's mind,
all but a passing tear
in God's eye.

- toad -

And The Wind Whispered

And the wind whispered,
come,
let me take you away
where there
is
No time, only lazy summer days
watching the sun dance
across the sky,
and the clouds
entangled,
begging for release.
And the wild crow cried,
I know a magic land
where the trees laugh and bow
trying to find
what they lost
long ago.
But no one bothered
to listen.
The sea screamed, hitting hard
against the shore,
never returned.
The wild crow flew away
to his magic land.
Old man winter came to rule
his quiet domain,
and only the free winds
cried.

- toad -

My Dog

In back of the crumbling shed
lays my dog with a hole in her head.
A boy having fun
with his father's new gun,
took aim and filled her with lead.

- Gale Blogg -

Carson Lantz

A little boy named Carson Lantz
would get his kicks by killing ants.
He'd take a looking glass and turn
it to the sun and watch them burn.

What makes a boy with docile looks
Put worms inside his mother's books?

- Gale Blogg -

The Wreck

I sat on the curb in front of our house. It was a hot, muggy Sunday and tiny gnats kept crowding around my festering mosquito bites.

None of my friends were around. Most of them had gone away for the day. My mom had taken my little brother and sister to Grandmother's. She had her doubts about leaving me at home but I reminded her that I was twelve years old. I'd be a teenager next year.

I thought about riding my bike down to the river. My friends and I used to like to go to the river a lot. We'd catch tiny crabs and take them to my girlfriend's father for his fishing bait.

I loved to wade in the shallow part of the river. The bottom was covered with long, slimy seaweed. Sometimes it would wrap around my ankles and I'd get panicky. It was almost as if the seaweed had arms and was trying to pull me under.

We had planned to go swimming that afternoon, but none of us felt like going since our former first grade teacher had drowned herself there a few weeks ago. They found her car parked under the bridge one morning and she was floating a ways downstream. I can't figure out why she'd want to stop living. Adults always seemed a lot sadder than kids.

A freight train was going by at the end of our block. I liked the sound of the freights. They put me to sleep at night when they'd go by. Our big, old house would rattle.

While I was sitting there, Mrs. Crate came walking by. She was a nutty, little lady that lived down the street. She always carried a big shopping bag with handles that was always full of something. I was dying to find out what she carried in that bag. I was kind of scared of her, though. She talked funny and it was hard to understand her.

"How you day? Be warm day." She'd kind of yodel it. I could imitate her pretty good and make my friends laugh.

Jimmy Miller went riding by on his bike, going to the store for his mother. His family was the family that lived on the road in back of our house. He had about eight brothers and sisters. My friend Dave always used to say to him, "Open your mouth, Jimmy and show us your Dentine smile," or "Here comes the human dustbowl."

I rode my bike downtown and bought a blueberry popsicle. It was melting real fast and my hands got sticky so I rode over to the park to wash them in the fountain. A middle aged woman was sitting on a bench just staring into space. Her hands were folded and she wasn't even blinking an eye.

It was late in the afternoon when I reached home. I heard a freight coming. I peddled fast down the street so I could be close when it went by. I liked to wave to the conductor.

The red railroad lights were flashing and the bells were clanging. An automobile was coming fast from the east. It all happened so fast. It never occured to me that the driver of the car wouldn't stop. You'd have to be crazy to try and beat a train - especially when it was so close.

The engine of the train split the car right in half. The loud squeal of the train's brakes vibrated in my chest and head. A body landed a few yards from me. It was a woman's body. It couldn't move - the body didn't have any legs.

Blood trickled down the hill to where I stood. I looked down to notice my foot was in a dark red puddle. My canvas shoe had a purple tinge as it seeped up the blood. I felt weak - like I was going to faint.

In a few minutes there were firetrucks and ambulances. I got on my bike and rode home. There was a funny odor in the air and it made me nauseated.

The whole town had gathered down at the tracks. There were cars parked up and down the street and people were hurrying down the sidewalk. I just sat on my front porch wondering why all these people thought it was so important for them to see that awful wreck.

I must have been sitting on the porch for a long time. It was quiet now. The cars and firetrucks were gone but that weird smell still hung in the air. I felt a dampness on my left foot and looked down at my bloody shoe. I took both shoes off and threw them in the rubbish behind the garage. Those old tennis shoes were too worn out anyway. I had been needing to get a new pair.

- Gale Blogg -

My Loves Asleep

My loves asleep with day's expiration.
A man in limber repose.
I see his spirit, his respiration.
What reveries there? What may I suppose?
He dreams of triumphs of adolesence,
or dreams of failures in seniority.
Now regard the smile of sweet innocence;
and now the frown of mass enormity.
He stirs from slumber like a dormant bear.
Hair disarranged, his eyes blind to the light
And says "What, what, what am I doing here?"
"Oh, sleep my love, slumber into the night."
My love is asleep, man inside a child.
My love is asleep, strong and yet so mild.

- Pat Bohler -

Foggy Mental Breakdown

Atomic Fallout from the skies
falls apon your head,
blinds your eyes.
We feel the earth quiver and quake,
as we have realized our deadly mistake.
We can not correct it
by turning back the hands of time,
we are doomed to be eaten by death,
like the stomach upon the consumption of lime.

The radiation dust is eating away our minds,
it is all a matter of time
before we experience a foggy mental breakdown
and our bodies become part of the ground.
Brace yourself and get you down,
in the distance, coming near,
is the Foggy Mental Breakdown.....

--California Kid--

Take Me Away

Well, I was lonely, I was a little down
so I took to looking around the town,
wound up at a local bar with a band,
playing rhythm and blues, something I
could listen to, something I could use.
The place was dark and crowded with
beer-bellied cowboys and some wild youngsters too.
Pool table was in the middle of the floor,
and he was standing by the men's door.

Yes now take me away, take me away,
let's ride out in the sunset with my
arms clutched around your waist
and singing a good country tune.

Feeling a little funny, being the only woman there.
When I past by the line-up, everyone stopped and stared.
I ordered a tall one and sat at a table.
He was coming towards me with a spunky
look in his eye, yes, I was able,
to see your face, dark and gloomy, yet
you seemed to light up the whole place.

Yes, now take me away, take me away,
pick up some speed in our pony race,
my arms are still holding on to your waist,
I can feel myself tripping out to space.

You said, "Hello darling, how are you doing?"
I said, "I'm doing fine," then you took
my glass, saying, "for a pretty woman
like you should be drinking wine."
There I was sitting beside you,
taking in everything, everything in view,
didn't say too much, not much to be said,
when you know what is gonna be ahead.
He took my hand in his to escape outside.
This man was a rambling traveler,
all his life on his bike and I was tumbling after.

Yes, take me away, so far away,
don't stop too long at one place,
remember my arms are still at your waist,
come on, let's don't leave a trace.

You and me with a house of stars over our heads
holding hands in our grassy bed.
Are you a man that wants to hold on to love?
I don't know really, it's too early to tell.
No, I believe you're a free spirit riding in the wind.
You could never be a package to be sent in.
You were telling me, you'll see me again.
Such a lier, such a dreamer, such a charmer.
We both know we had only today
and nothing else hereafter.

- Lezlie Gray -

FLUSH AFTERPILOT FROM TITULAR ISOLATION
ROUTE NINE NINE THRU MAGNETIC MEMORY
PERUSAL PATTERN OBTAINED WITH KNOWLEDGE
POLARIZED POLES ALEPH NULL CONSTANT
COLLAPSIUM CLAD CALLOUS CURSE
DISSOLVING MICRON MEMORY EGO
SURGE ANALYSIS PULSE

SOMA DITTER THIS IS SEDUCTRIA SMOGSMOCK OF
SPLIT END DEPOT TILTSPLIT CLOISTER
YOU ARE ON SIMULTANEOUS MULTISCREEN
WITH MY TIME CONSTANTS IN MIRRORED SPIRALS
OMITTED PERIOD IN SPELL MATRIX WORKING
GONNA GO BACK IN TIME TO SOME SWAMP
THROWBACK SOME MUTATED GENES FOR ME
TRANSLATE THAT STATIC SURGE PULSE AGAIN
DISRUPTION NINE AND CLOSING CUD HAV SED
TOSSED UP IN SOFT CURVY SECRET CODE
OVALLY NOVOID EROTIC CHANGELING CLAIM
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STONE AGE BEAUTY WHO DOES SHE THINK SHE IS
REFLECTED IN TIDAL POOLS
CANCEROUS CELLS BEGAN TO SWELL VICIOUSLY
IN HER POISONED LIVER
SHE SPIT A BLOODY NAUSEATING POTION
AS FAR AS SHE COULD
AND EYED THE SHIFTING HOLOGRAM
OF CONTACT WITH RAPTURE
AH THE ACCURSED REFLECTIONS
AND THEIR SECRET NAMES

CELL CYCLE CEILING
CENTRALLY SOFT FOCUS CENTRALLY
SCAN SEARCH SATURATION
SYNCH SLIP SLANT SMEAR

Reality of A Dream

All day long the sky remained overcast. It had started raining when I entered the school. There was a feeling of loneliness and uneasiness as I stared at the cluttered walls. Students passed by me with not so much as "hello." I began to feel dejected and unwanted.

I hadn't wanted to come here, but I was a victim of circumstance. I had been born black. I guess God wanted me that way. I never questioned it.

I still remember the decisive letter I received. It was all sort of confusing but I do recall something about "racial balance." Now what the hell was that all about? I was only a confused 13-year-old kid with no idea except that I was being forced to do something that I didn't want to do.

My mother had briefed me on behavior the night before. Twenty miles of drudgery five days a week to obtain that fascinating thing known as "education."

The bus ride was one of unpleasantness since I was the only passenger of an expected 50 students. Somehow I felt like an outcast.

The other parents had made it clear that their children would not be bussed 20 miles to school when they could attend one less than 1 mile away. To hell with politics!

Obviously, my parents felt entirely different. They say no other alternative, because they wanted me to experience the feeling of an education - something they could never boast of.

I didn't go simply because my parents ordered me to, I went also for the sake of them being proud of me. This was their hopes and aspirations - to someday see their daughter's name up in lights.

Well, here I am! Where do I go from here?

I walked down the never-ending hallway and turned the corridor. I nearly rubbed noses with a blonde, curly haired girl of about 12.

"Excuse me," I found myself saying.

"That's ok," was the response. "You're new here aren't ya?"

"So you noticed!"

"Well it's very hard not to!"

The conversation continued. I found out her name was Joyce. She showed me the room which I was to go to. She said to meet her in the cafeteria at noon and we would eat together. But at noon Joyce didn't sit with me. She sat with her friends at a corner table finding it hard to suppress her laughter. I felt like the low man on the totem pole. I had no where to go. I sat in a far corner wanting to crawl into the woodwork and take up permanent residence there. I ate my lunch in silence and got up to leave. Suddenly, I found myself being surrounded by faces both left and right. They began moving in on me closer and closer. What were they going to do to me? I didn't know them and they didn't know me - or did they? No, impossible.

Their leader, who appeared to be Joyce, whispered something to one of her friends. It proceeded like a chain reaction to the other students. When the final student had received the info, the entire building seemed to experience a tremor when they roared with laughter.

All kinds of thoughts invaded my mind. What were they planning? Will I live to see the sunrise? I suddenly grew afraid. I've got to get out of here! Where were those damned teachers? Where was God? What kind of a school is this anyway? Mother!

One of the larger boys moved in closer and began toying with my hair. This aroused in me an even greater anger. I jerked back but to the delight of the boy. Where the humor was, I was in no mood to find out. It was Joyce that spoke. "We have decided to put you to the test."

"What test?" I inquired nervously.

"Your initiation test."

"My what?"

"Initiation test. We're here to determine whether you belong here or not."

"I'm not taking any test."

"Yes you are if you wish to remain here. You will be given one of two grades - pass or fail."

"What happens if I fail?"

"LET'S HOPE it doesn"t come to that. But if it does, you will be justifiably punished."

"By who?"

"Why us, the Red Demons, of course."

"Red Demons?"

"Yes. We are turned on by the sight of red objects. Especially blood."

I shivered at their last statement. "You people must all be kind of weird. I never heard such nonsense before. I refuse to go through with it." My voice rose louder and louder in hopes of attracting a teacher.

"No one is going to hear you. The teachers have all gone home," assured Joyce.

"Gone home? That can't be, they have students here."

"We gave them the rest of the day off. We figured they were probably tired."

"You? What do you mean?"

"We are the authority here. They obey us."

"WHAT!"

"Never mind. You mentioned something about a refusal. Does that still hold?"

I pondered over the situation. They were actually serious. But I just couldn't go through with it. "Yes," I answered quickly.

"Then you leave us no alternative." Take her to the basement!" ordered Joyce in a contemptuous voice.

I was dragged unwillingly to that dark, wet hellhole and dragged inside: The light switch by the door was finally turned on to shed some light. I was shoved into the seat of a chair infested with gadgets. A huge belt was wrapped around my waist to strap me down. This was what technical science had labeled an electric chair and there I sat. I wasn't dealing with a bunch of amateurs, these were pros. My life rested in their hands, and that moment it didn't look too healthy. My mouth was taped through my helpless protests.

"There is 10,000 volts of electricity in this chair, enough for death to result instantaneously if you want it that way."

Death! God what is happening to me? I closed my eyes for what was to come. I shook my head in defeat and silently prayed for deliverance.

Someone must have started the chair. It felt like the after effects of an earthquake then it began to feel worse. I felt a queasiness in my head and stomach as the effects were beginning to be sensed.

I heard sounds of shock, disbelief, and sorrow. Some of which I couldn't tell was inferred. I didn't really care. I began to slip into a total state of oblivion. They had chosen for me to die slowly. This was the most painful of all. If you are going to kill me, do it as quickly as possible. I wanted to shout that at the top of my lungs but something stopped me. It wasn't just the tape on my mouth. So this was what dying was like. I certainly didn't want to experience it in this fashion - yet I didn't have too much choice. This was it! I could feel it. That decisive volt struck me directly in the head as I terminated my confession to God. Goodby lovely world.

What was this? I was being repeatedly shaken. Where was I? Stop! Stop! I opened my eyes to have them fall directly on my mother. "Wake up child. You have overslept on your very first school day."

But it couldn't be. That wasn't a dream. It was all so real. I looked at my alarm clock. Why hadn't it gone off? Or had it? My mother said she had turned the alarm clock off because it looked like I wasn't going to. Yet, I had never heard it, or had I? It's possible that I was so emotionally entangled in this dream that I had heard it and thought it to be part of it. I thought about the fact that I still had to go to school and this dream certainly hadn't helped matters any. This was only a dream! It could never happen! Where would a bunch of 12 and 13 year olds possibly get an electric chair?

I got out of bed and opened the curtains. The sun was shining beautifully and it looked like it was going to be a very nice day.

- Gloria Adams -

Disco Joe
or
What's A Disco Baby?

The American Heritage Dictionary defines baby as : (1) a very young child; infant. (2) the youngest member of a family or group. (3) one who acts like an infant. (4) Slang, a girl or young woman. Disco is defined as: a phonograph record. So technically, a Disco Baby would be a "young phonograph record."

But, Joseph G. McMahon, assistant manager of Just Pants in Bolingbrook is considered by the employees and people on the "side lines" as "Disco Joe" or "Disco Baby." Being six feet five, one hundred and seventy-nine pounds, with his dark brown, neatly-styled hair and greenish-blue, contact-corrected eyes -- Joe definitely has no resemblance to a phonograph record. Even though he sometimes fulfills the third definition of baby, he's not an infant - not at age twenty-one. He's not the youngest of his family nor is he a woman.

So what's a Disco Baby? Well, take an average male or female who likes to dance, dress them in some fancy clothes, teach them a variety of dances to a wide selection of songs and then stick them in a downtown Chicago discotheque and ta-da - instant "Disco Baby."

Being a Disco Baby isn't that simple. As Joe would say, "A Disco Baby isn't a no-good "hippy freak" looking for a place to "cop a buzz." Nor is a discotheque just a hang out for strung-out freaks.

A Disco Baby isn't just an ordinary, everyday, run of the mill person who likes to dance. Talent and appearance seem essential to Joe.

Joe has a few qualifications and standards he feels he must keep up to remain a Disco Baby.

Joe is very particular about his appearance. He hasn't always been slim. He once had a good sized "spare tire" for a belly. But even before he lost a noticable seventy pounds, he took pride in his appearance.

One of Joe's outfits (like most of them) would consist of the following: first a "Nik-Nik" shirt, which is an expensive print dress shirt. His pants would be a solid color knit, also very expensive. Joe would usually get soaked for some extra bucks for tailoring (because of his long legs.) He needs a thirty-eight inseam. Since his pants are "Boulet" brand, the price is again influenced a few more bucks. His neck is accented by 18 kt. gold chains, while his feet (despite his height) are in platforms. And around him is a distinct scent of "Armais" cologne. Also considered an ultimate characteristic of a Disco Baby.

Joe's favorite Discos are all of class and he has a variety: Faces, Phoenix, Bullwinkles, Bo-Jangles and his favorite, BBC. Joe usually goes on Fridays and Saturdays. He is well known and envied because of his dancing talent. The Bus Stop, Hollywood, Salsa, Zodiac, Arrow Moon Walk, Jaws are just a few of the many dances Joe can do smoothly, plus various combinations of dances.

Dancing is an art to Joe. He takes pride in his dancing, and his pet peeve is those who take advantage of dancing. He has nothing against people who try to dance. After all, not everyone can be a good dancer. What Joe can't stand is people who just move with no sense of rhythm or feeling. He calls those people "Rose" and the dance they are attempting is called "Rose" in memory of a former employee who danced awkwardly.

Not all his time is devoted to dancing. Joe always keeps up with the latest fads, such as, shaving his chest and burning his underwear, which happens to be the latest announcement he made at work. Joe also manages to fit in a cruise or two every year plus a few "week long" trips.

Joe will soon be leaving the Disco scene in Chicago and move to Texas. But Joe will adjust rapidly as long as he has a few choice discos and a backroom to practice in. He'll be well adjusted even if "Disco, Step by Step" falls through.

"Disco, Step by Step" is a program where the latest dances are explained. It's presently being broadcasted in Chicago. Chances are Joe will be the "Step by Step" star in Texas, regardless if the show is broadcast or not.

- Cheryl McCutcheon -

You Interfere!

You interfere!
Thoughts of you pulsate through my mind!
I can't concentrate!
You dominate my consciousness!
Unbidden! Unwanted!
You rule my subconscious
Manifesting your presence in my dreams.

I think I've conquered another.
A smile -- a word and I'm lost again.
I pray for release from this torture
But yet I savor it.

You are wonderful!
I desire your friendship!
But if these unwelcome emotions persist
I will avoid you!
I can not exist in constant turmoil
With images of you demanding my attention!

- Anonymous -

Gerald Ford: Fear and Damnation

Our school books have lied to us. Power in America does not rest with the people, who vest it in their government for the common good. True power over social and economic destinies is held by a small, closed corporate class undergirded by a global network of business operations. Government functions to maintain an environment conducive to profit for the corporations while keeping the governed in harness as consumers. The recent State of the Union address well documented this. An intolerably high unemployment rate is now incorporated into the federal government's economic planning despite the profound damage done to human lives by job loss. The budgets of programs to feed, educate and heal Americans will be cut to reduce government expenditures. Yet the complex of arms manufacturers known as "the defense industry" is promised 8.3 billion dollars in fresh government business.

Gerald Ford, as President, is the titular head of the American Establishment based on the above dynamics. Mr. Ford's future in this post is tied to his political popularity. High approval ratings from the public and invincibility within his political party may earn Ford another term in the White House. But Mr. Ford's public esteem is sliding downward while he faces a stiff challenge from one flank of his own party. Further, the President's predicament symbolizes a crisis of American values of supreme significance.

The job of President requires Mr. Ford to impress two messages upon the public: "Buy more" and "Don't worry." Obedience to the first command keeps our capitalist economy healthy. Obedience to the latter protects the oligarchies which monopolize the nation's wealth and power.

The public response to these exhortations is not uniform. Some people are outraged and retaliate with boycotts, court suits, guerilla warfare, political campaigns, and other orthodox and unorthodox means of reforming society. Another small group fervently clutches the banner raised by the President and unfurling it across newspaper pages and luncheon daises, gratefully apes Mr. Ford's affirmation of faith. Public opinion polls and personal experience claim that the majority of Americans react in neither extreme style. Most men and women simply shrug their beaten shoulders and reluctantly conclude that their Commander in Chief is ignorant of the true state of the Union.

Mr. Ford sporadically displays a vague awareness of this uneasiness in his land and its political ramifications for him. He has waded into crowds of common folk and convened huge conferences with representatives of middle class organizations in a pathetic search for a grip on the national consciousness. Enlightment eludes the President precisely because of the sinews of his long, successful career.

Sent to the Congress twelve times by the religious voters of a conservative Midwestern city, Jerry Ford developed a narrow, parochial philosophy based on partisan combativeness and an impenetrable belief in the American system. Enduring success with the voters secured a Congressional leadership post for him. This position further diminished Mr. Ford's contact with anyone powerless or disaffected. The years preceding his Presidency found Jerry Ford securely wound within a cocoon that had grown progressively thicker as he and Grand Rapids had come to take each other for granted.

Suddenly, wretched events thrust Mr. Ford into an exorcising process as mechanistic as his redundant political success. The consequences of this awkward development are now upon us. The demands of the office obviously outstrip the abilities of the occupant.

While the President gropes for acceptance, devoid of insight, the irrelevance of the Presidency plagues the nation. The President feels fearful as the people feel damned. Both feel a sense of loss as a lifetime's belief in America erodes. The failure of our leader to understand the causes of the public desperation heralds chaos of unpredictable duration but certainly bitter resolution.

- Patrick McGuire -

Two in Twelve

We started at moderate pace in the middle of the near turn. The building was on our right hand side as we ran counter-clockwise around the track. When I began I looked first to check, and yes, the midpoint of the goal posts was directly to my left. Bill checked his watch.

Bill jumped to the front. I let him lead almost always so he would pace me. Being in second place didn't bother me. I could "sit back" and follow and think at the same time. In the lead, I felt a responsibility to keep it and to set a vigorous pace. Also I couldn't see behind me. There was always more thrill in trying to attain the lead at the end than trying to hold it through the whole run. Our running wasn't really a race but sometimes it turned out to be because we were so closely matched.

Around the far turn, 220 yards away, a Loggins and Messina tune popped into my head. About three weeks ago I had first heard the album. It now was the only music I listened to. The music played in my head. It started, replayed, finished and replayed again in a jumble. My favorite parts came over and over again. In my head the music was perfect. What I wanted to hear, I heard. What I didn't want to hear didn't play. My mind didn't record perfectly, but what it played back was beautiful.

The tune always conjured memories of bicycling down country highways with my friends. From there my upcoming bike trip flirted through my mind. "One" clicked in my mind as we completed the first lap. I imagined riding up and over those majestic Rockies with that song ringing in my ears.

'Love and friends are all
you need in the end."

How I liked those lines. They were so true for me. Repl

Bill suddenly was twenty feet ahead I quickened and lengthened the next fifteen paces and was then two yards behind again. The goon was taller than me and had longer legs. Using the same number of steps, I always fell behind "two." I timed his left foot with mine. His, mine, his, mine, his, mine, his, mine, his, mine, mine, his, mine, his, mine, his, mine, mine, his, mine, his, mine. Let's see. I took eleven paces to his nine - the SOB. 11/20. I did 55% of the running, no wonder I was always so tired. Me 55% - him 45% - 10% difference. It's like if he rested 5% or one tenth of a mile and I weighed 300 pounds for a tenth. In other words, I carried that turkey for 528 feet whenever I ran two miles with him.

"Hey, Billy! When I run two miles with you I carry you about 528 feet so don't moan about being burnt out on the last sprint. B[illegible]

"Three," clicked off.

"What?"

"Never mind, Bill, it's a private joke. I'll explain it later."

"You're crazy, you know that?"

"Make me." I like throwing in things that make no sense at all. He looked back at me, oddly, with a smirk of understanding and said nothing.

I wonder if there is any truth to those calculations. We both weigh 150 and we both run two miles; energy expenditure must be equal. Well, it's something to occupy my mind.

"Love and friends
are all you need in the end."

It's Barb's album. I'm going to buy my own as soon as I can afford to blow five bucks. I took a deep breath and thought of Barb. Running was the time I thought of her least. It's hard not to think of her.

A second wind took me over and I took the lead from Bill. When I first started running every day, my lungs took the main punishment. They felt "bronchially stretched" "choke burnt" and "raved out." My thighs felt like a side of pig hanging on a meathood in the A & P. The day after hard running, my legs felt like they were composed of pain fibers instead of muscle fibers. Every step stretched and exercised the fibers, especially in my lower calf. Only sitting could put my pain fibers at ease. However, now running had little effect on me except making me sleepy.

My breathing was harder since I had accelerated around Bill. We had both speeded up. He was three feet behind me. There was a small nagging pain developing in my ankles and calves. Our faster than average pace caused it. My lungs, heaving about 85% capacity felt no pain yet.

From behind I heard, "that's a bad ass wind, on the first straightaway. It must be 25 miles an hour, as we run into it."

"For sure. It chews royal donkey dung as far as I'm concerned." I had to turn my head 90 degrees to the left to' be sure Bill heard my reply. "Six."

"Here we go again," and we dug into the wind. Human bullets plunging through a massive transparent marshmellow. The wind pushed into my gaping mouth. It felt like I was breathing under someone else's power. Air, I craved it. We were running fast now into the gate.

"We've gone about 9½ minutes; 2½ left."

"Shit, we're doing good, Bill. That's about - 90 second laps - 6 minute miles. I want to try - for two - in twelve minutes," I said as my breathing hindered me from speech. I sped up but not too fast as to burn out and die at the end.

"Bill," he didn't hear me. "Bill!" Tell me - when I got - 90 seconds left. Scream or something."

"Okay."

Pain was now everywhere; legs, lungs, right shoulder, feet. All that I could think was go - come on - get two in twelve! I heard and felt the dull thud of my feet repetitiously going thump, thump, thump, thump over and over again. It always happened like that at the end. My feet sang the "Last Half Mile Blues." All thoughts leave the mind except the pain and the thump, thump.

"Ninety seconds left."

Shit again. I had six hundred yards to go. I accelerated slightly again. Pain, thump, thump, pain, thump, thump. Over and over. "Seven." Last lap - gun lap. Around the curve and into the wind. I pushed. Come on. Only a minute left. Ages later the far turn melted away. The wind was in my face - three paces now on my side - seven paces - on my back. With 220 yards remaining, I knew I had about 30 seconds. I started to sprint. On my toes I ran like a deer, it seemed. But I knew it wasn't [illegible] so fast. When I sprint the pain disappears - it's pushed aside at least for a few seconds. My body becomes stunned to numbness. Movement is so intense nothing else exists. I pushed on, on. I peaked over my shoulder to help pass the time. Bill was only eight feet behind. "A, B, C - easy as 1, 2, 3; simple as you and me," I thought. PAIN, it hit me, AIR, I need it! Going full speed I thought. I kept pushing as hard as God would make my feet, legs, arm and chest move. "Two, four, six, eight, who do we appreciate? Twelve minute two milers! By the time I get to Phoenix I'll be DONE!"

I plopped into the grass of the football field for five minutes, lying on my back. I heard you can get more air quicker that way. It's true, too. My lungs were screaming like twin babies for their hours overdue formula. Air. I love it. Running, I hate it. Achieving, it's worth it.

"How fast, Bill?" Gulping gas, Bill choked out eleven fifty-five.

"Great!"

My head throbbed as if it was filled with fluid and someone was pumping the brakes. The pain in my lungs was gone already. My body was being satiated by the incoming oxygen. Thank you lungs. Those babies ought to get the congressional medal for service above and beyond.

As my bodily activities slowed music replayed again inside.

. . . love and friends
are all you need in the end.
Growing,
the seed we're sowing
we're gonna keep it growing
as long as we can . . .

I like those words, so much truth it seems - but at times I don't know. Is that all? Bill was jogging his last lap as usual. I quit philosophizing.

"Hey, Turkey, REST!" Bill came around the last curve and we both walked inside to the showers. Two bodies in accelerated states. I felt proud, two in twelve. Great!

- Len Heine -

Samoan Idyll

False dawn approached as I made my way down the path from Alua's house, towards the beach and the small pier that served the village of Apia in American Samoa.

I continued down the curving path, contemplating the fact that on the afternoon tide we would leave this beautiful island, never, in all probability, to return. As I came about the last turn of the path, onto the beach, the sun had already turned the sky red, prior to its appearance over the horizon.

Pausing to look around at this spectacular display, I glanced briefly at my ship lying quietly at anchor, its white hull outlined against the still, dark waters. Turning towards the pier, I noticed a figure sitting on a bollard. I should have anticipated it, but hadn't. It was Tolofa!

Every morning she sat, waited, and gazed with love and longing upon Nelson, the bowhook of the whaleboat. Every morning at sunrise the boat came to the pier, ostensibly to pick up mail, but in reality to pick up those of the crew who had by some means struck up an alliance or dalliance with some Polynesian beauty.

Quickly, my mind raced to what strategy I could use on this lovely creature, who was the object of lustful desire by most of the male population of both the village and the visiting ship. But no blandishments whatsoever swayed her. She had eyes only for Nelson, who was eighteen, shy, naive, and did not or could not comprehend her silent devotion.

I quickly approached her and engaged in some inconsequential conversation. We walked down off the pier and a short distance along the beach, my mind still searching for some way to induce her surrender to my passions. Outright physical attack was out of the question, as apprehension and punishment would surely follow.

Suddenly the answer appeared. Even in the short months of our visit, we had learned some of the culture of our hosts. The women selected their mates, in a rather fickle manner to our eyes, but there was one situation where they were vulnerable to the males. When they were totally naked, they had no recourse legally or culturally to resist.

Continuing my seemingly innocent talk, I casually approached her side and with a quick flip, undid her lava-lava and tossed it into the sea. For a startled moment both of us stood paralyzed, she in utter astonishment and I, frozen into immobility by this seductive and alluring creature. Never had I beheld such beauty. There we stood, but suddenly, before I could grab her, she bounded out of reach and raced up the beach to the pier, and along the road leading to the village.

The view of her streaming hair and bouncing butt as she disappeared into the village has haunted my imagination these past forty years. Even as I stood in perplexed horror that the most golden opportunity of my life had slipped out my hand, my subconscious mind restored the sound of the approaching ship's boat, and never, never would I again see Tolofa.

- Frank Kodrick -

Log Entry: Haiti, Final Day

There is a curious natural phenomenon that few men know about, let alone have witnessed. When the sun rises over the ocean, if all the variables align, the first few direct rays appear to be Kelly Green. Among people in my profession, such a sighting is very prestigious.

The climate here in Haiti is most conducive to this happening, and we have decided that we should make every effort to take advantage of our last day here; besides, an ocean sunrise will make a good lead photograph for our story.

Jack Shelton has been with the National Geographic Society as a photographer for over twelve years. He has more awards for his work than any other regular staff member. He has been to the North Pole, Mt. Everest, and Southeast Asia, every country in Western Europe, Northern Africa, the Middle East, and all of the Americas, except Cuba.

"Hand me some Plus-X."

"Where is it?"

"Green bag, on the left."

"I don;t see it."

"That's because your cranial - rectal inversion is interferring."

"My WHAT?"

When Jack explains things to me, his Louisiana lilt turns to Washington correspondent crispness.

"You've got your head up your ass."

Robert Vernon Pflug, BA University of Minnesota, MA University of Chicago, three years with the San Francisco Chronicle, and I'm going to let him shoot a sunrise with black and white.

"Sorry, what's up?"

"Your mind, at least it's not in this boat."

"Well, I guess that I'm still asleep."

"Heads up. It won't be long now."

In another hour, we had our sunrise, I had my coup, and we were back in our cabin on the beach making breakfast.

"Let's go for a dive.'

"Sounds like a good idea, if you're awake. I don't want any sleepy company on the ocean floor."

"Don't worry. I'm alright now. Those pancakes smell good."

Jack makes excellent pancakes, as a matter of fact, Jack is a good cook, period. I think he has as many recipes as he has pictures. When he got here last week, the first thing he did was to throw me out of the kitchen. He won't even let me help clean up. I do offer from time to time, though, to be sociable about it.

"Here you go, my boy, Bavarian pancakes, Hatian fruit salad, and Bedouin-Sinai coffee."

"Now that's what I call a meal!"

"If only we had some Vermont syrup."

"Too fattening."

We spent breakfast going over the story, and planning our dive. Jack remembered a small key just about a mile beyond where we shot the sunrise, and we figured that it might have some good diving. As Jack tidied up his kitchen, I loaded the Whaler, and checked the qquipment.

The most convenient way to get to this little village is by water. There are no roads for about six miles, only twisted little mountain paths. This island is mostly up and down. LaSalle Peak is ten miles from the Caribbean shore, and rises to 8,773 feet. Twenty miles to the East is Lake Enriquillo, 131 feet below sea level. We take the boat eight miles down the coast for fuel, mail and most supplies. Most of the goods are brought into this spot by mule train from a main highway.

At 9:30, we set out. Now that the story was written, and the pictures were taken, we have just one day to pack, but we figured that we could spend the morning taking a little detour.

We circled the island once, then decided to drop anchor on the leeward side of the island, at the end of a long reef. We put on our gear, made a final check and dove into the warm Caribbean. We snorkled along the surface, looking for a good descent. At the seaward tip of the reef, the face dropped off about seventy feet to the shelf. We both took our mouthpieces and started down.

The sea was calm, and we found no strong underwater currents. The reef was out in force, putting on its best display. (Of course, that's one of the benefits of working for the Society.) If you don't dive, you never know what real peace and quiet is like. There is no freedom like weightlessness. There is no companionship like a pair of divers.

About fifty yards from where we intersected the shelf, we noticed a large cave, and we decided to go exploring. At the entrance, there were some cuts in the rocks, like a minisub had misjudged its approach, or been swept inside by an unfriendly current. The marks ran for about fifteen feet, until the cave widened . . . It was then that we noticed that our cave was actually a tunnel; light was showing through about sixty feet ahead, and ten feet above the entrance. We followed a pair of angel fish half-way, then they turned toward the bottom. With the depth guages reading fifty-five feet, we were astonished to find that we broke the surface. Our tunnel opened into a large cavern, and the sunlight came from twelve large overhead arc-lamps. There was a dock on the opposite side of the cavern, and a large door just behind it. Jack nudged my shoulder:

"I think we missed a NO TRESSPASSING sign, shall we check?"

I nodded concurrence.

At seventy-five feet, we encountered a large section of chain-link fence which wasn't there thirty seconds ago.

Like it or not, we were someone's guests. When we resurfaced, the overhead door was open. We swam over to the dock, and climbed up the ladder. We hung our flippers from the scuba release straps, and looked around. The whole place was absolutely barren, not even a cigarette butt.

"What do you think?" Jack was the first to speak.

"Well - A. Eccentric billionaire; B. Smugglers, direct descendants of Bluebeard or L. J. Silver; C. CIA; D. Cuban commies: or E. None of the above."

"It would make a nice spot for a restaurant, though."

"Very romantic."

"I'll cook, you wash dishes, and we'll hire some shapely native girls to wiggle among the tables."

"Let's go see the rental manager."

Behind the dock, and the overhead door, was a room about the size of four two-car garages, two on each level. Along one side was a stairway that led to a catwalk, that in turn led to a small steel door. Along the other side empty shelves ran the length, and about eight feet up, at the far end, on the narrow wall were two doors, about eight feet apart, and centered.

"The lady or the tiger?"

"Jack will take the lady," gesturing to the door in front of him, and you can have the pussy."

We walked to our chosen doors, and rested one hand on the knob, the other on our knives. We took simultaneous deep breaths, looked at each other, and on Jack's nod, pushed. I grabbed the knob hard, twisted with steady even motion and put my shoulder to the task. Nothing. Jack was having about the same luck.

"How about the penthouse?" I asked, pointing toward the catwalk.

"Right now, I'd rather be working for them." Jack nodded as he spoke, and we crossed to the base of the stairs.

"As if you could survive shooting in an air-conditioned, automatically-humidified, hermetically-sealed studio."

"No, you got it all wrong. I'd do location stuff."

"Keep this one in mind."

"I think I'll leave this one to Playboy."

At the end of the catwalk, we had better luck. The door swung open easily to reveal what must have been the security room. Four televison monitors showed the cavern, and room outside. A row of switches and lights were underneath. One of the lights was blinking.

"Ten to one, that's the fishnet."

"Let's see." Jack threw the switch above it.

It was the overhead door. When it was completely shut, Jack returned the switch to its original position and the door went back up.

"Jimmy the Greek, your job is secure."

The first six from the right were for the lamps at the top of the cavern. The next for the lights in the garage. The eighth was for the lights in the security room. Experience had taught us that the next was for the overhead door.

"Okay, boy blunder, go see, I'll push buttons."

As I reached the bottom of the stairs, the entire cavern was plunged into darkness. My entire body coiled. My fist wrapped itself around my knife handle. My ears almost burst from listening for a foreign breath, or a menacing footstep.

"Twelve is the master."

My heart will never be the same again. I walked to the first door.

"Okay!"

"Well?"

"Nothing."

"Now?"

"NO!"

"Shit. Next."

"Okay!"

"Well?"

"Nothing."

"Now?"

"NO!"

A litany of international vulgarities, obviously well-practiced, erupted from the security room, and lasted until I crossed the catwalk.

"What now, Fatman, I'd light a signal fire, but my matches have gotten wet."

The tension was getting to us. We couldn't hold it back with light-hearted remarks any longer.

"Smoke - " Jack turned around slowly. There must be some sort of ventilation system."

"It's worth a try."

We walked out onto the catwalk, and began to survey the garage. The farther door was slightly ajar. I touched Jack's arm, and pointed. We both took another glance around the room, started down the stairs with our knives drawn and held low along our thighs. At the bottom, I turned toward the dock, not wanting anyone to slip up behind us. Jack walked to the door, and tried to see through the crack.

"A hallway and a stairwell," he whispered as I came up on the other side of the door. "I didn't see anyone."

I hit the door as hard as I could. The echo of the steel door hitting the concrete wall was deafening in the narrow corridor. Jack came rushing past me and stopped halfway up the hallway behind a support. Taking the cue, I ran for the base of the stairs and slid into the narrow wedge beneath them. Jack came quickly behind me.

SLAM! The door at the end of the corridor was shut.

SLAM! A fire door by Jack's post followed.

SLAM! From somewhere above.

"Time to lose some weight."

Jack released his tank, and stripped off his weight belt. I wasn't far behind him. He then stripped the weights from the belt, threaded his mask, snorkle, and flippers. As soon as I was similarly attired, Jack grabbed his knife, and burst up the stairwell. I followed.

The door at the top of the stairs was locked, of course, but there was a trap door at the top of the wall. Jack backed against the wall directly underneath it, and locked his fingers just under his stomach. I took his boost, and went onto his shoulders and pulled the release. The door swung down, followed by a folding ladder. From the landing, we could see that a narrow passage led to an escape chamber.

"I guess we over-stayed our welcome. I'll go get the tanks."

As Jack walked down the stairs, I climbed into the chamber. There were two hatches, upper and lower, a steel ladder, a large valve, and two pressure guages. I glanced down at my fathometer, 40 feet, and my watch: 10:45, we wouldn't even be out of air, yet.

"Come 'ere." Jack was on the landing, refitting his gear. "What do you think?"

"It looks like the real thing, just like in the movies." I climbed down beside him. It didn't take us long to get into the gear, then into the chamber. We checked the regulators, and fittings, then Jack sealed the lower hatch.

"One way or the other, we'll be out of here soon."

"I figure we've got about 35 minutes of air left."

"That sounds a little optimistic, especially at my pulse rate. Let's call it 30 and hope."

Jack just shook his head and bent down to the valve.

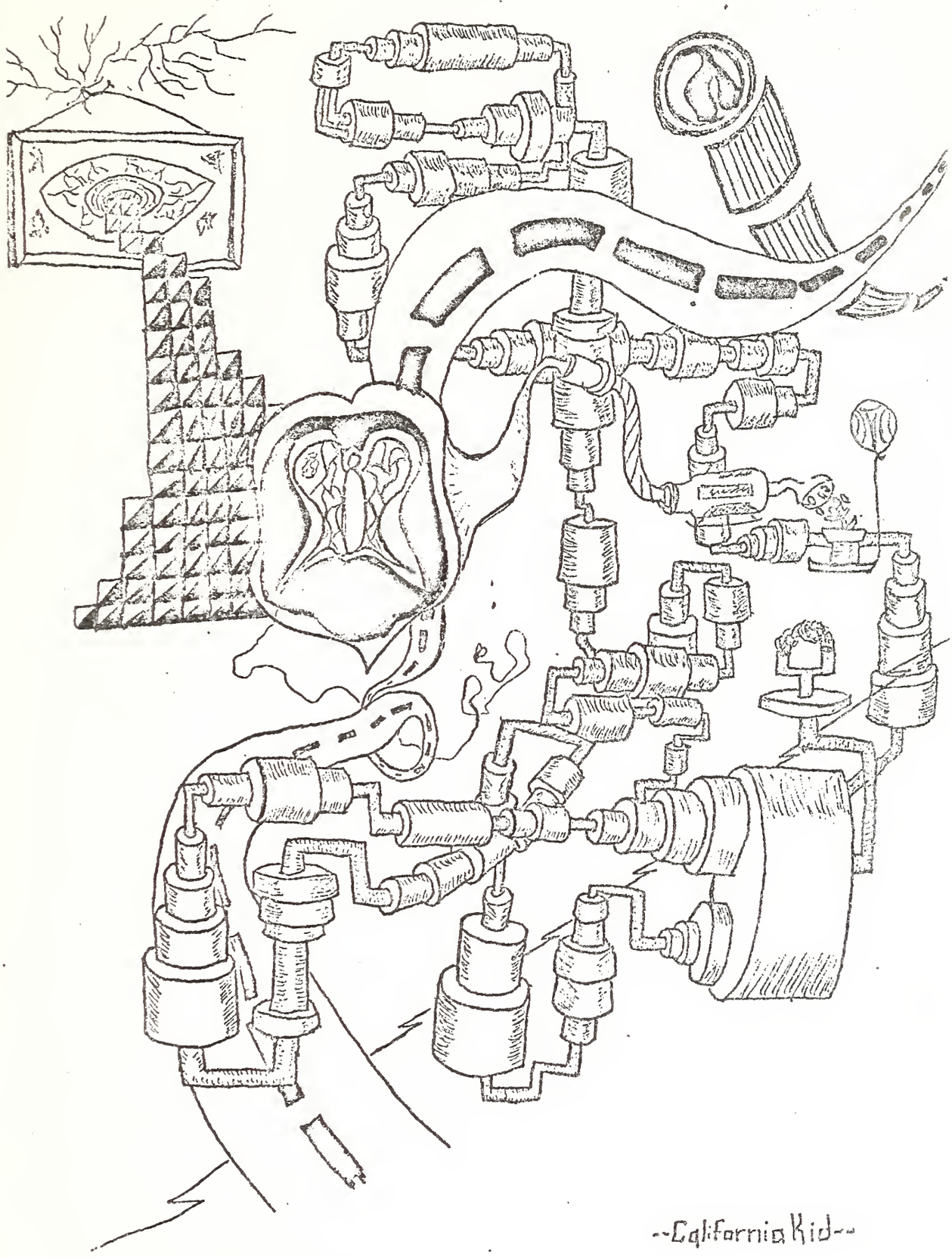
"Lend a hand."

Both of us, in various combinations of leverage couldn't get it to budge.

"This is a real shithole."

"The Shithole Restaurant, Key Gonave, Haiti, sounds like a very romantic setting." I stepped on the second rung of the ladder, and tried the top hatch. Nothing. Jack tried the bottom, Nothing.

"Three to nothing. The vote is 'Lock'."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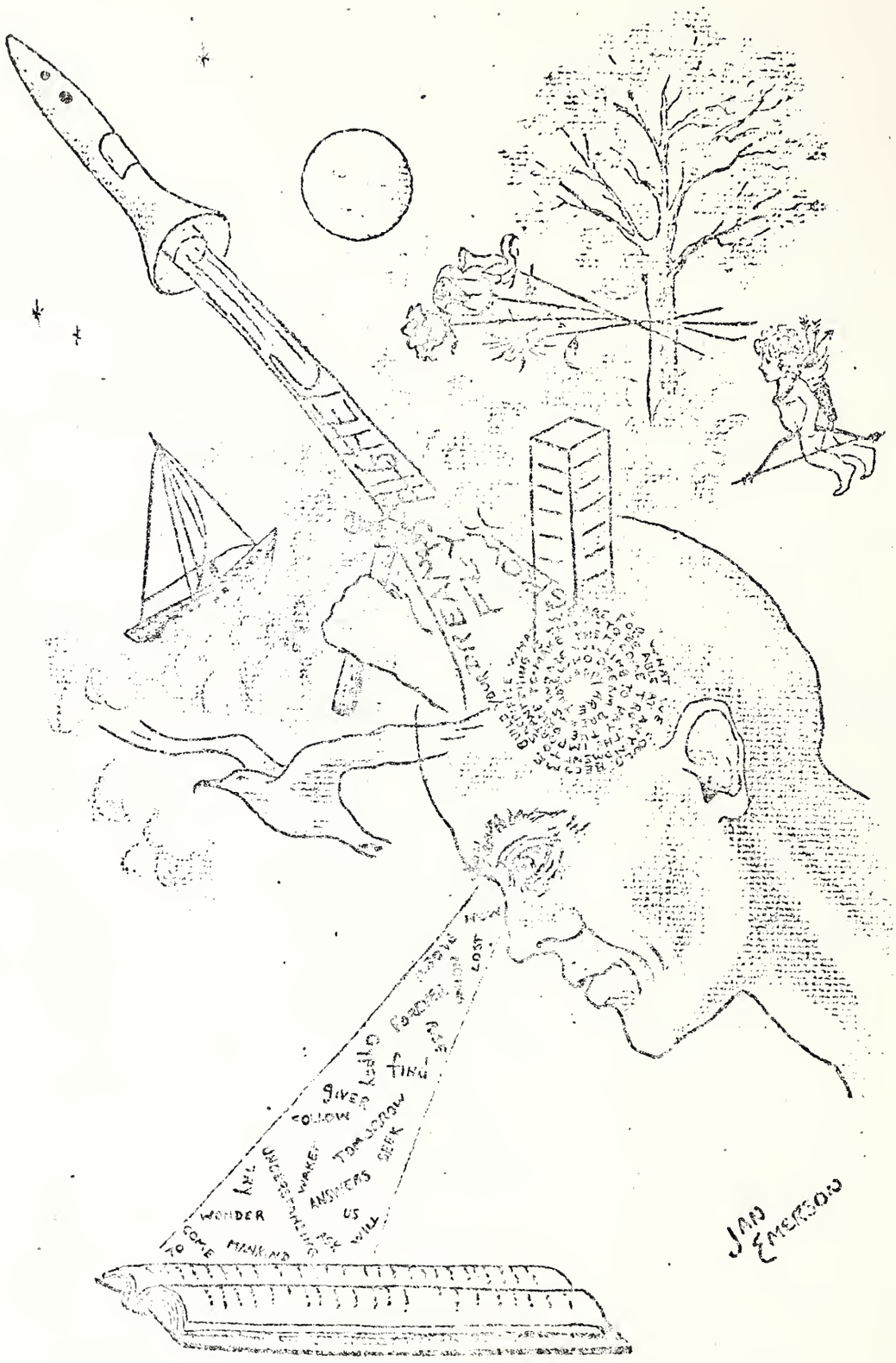

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